

# IRISH WRITING

THE MAGAZINE OF  
CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE

Edited by

**DAVID MARCUS**

and

**TERENCE SMITH**

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# *Irish Writing*

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CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE

Edited by

**DAVID MARCUS**

and

**TERENCE SMITH**

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## MARY LAVIN

### A GENTLE SOUL

I HAVE just come back from the graveside where the people of these parts performed their last neighbourly duties towards Agatha Darker. She was my sister. Since my father died two years ago, we lived alone in this house, we two, in silence and bitterness. And there were times when I used to wish this day upon us when she would be lowered into the clay that could be no blacker, nor colder, no more close, no more silent, than her own black heart.

It would have served the same ends if I were to die myself I suppose, but perhaps the thought that I would have Jamey Morrow to face kept me from dying many a time in the long long decades since I last laid eyes on him, or what was left of him under the straw and old sacks they put over him in the yard before they carried him down to his sister's cottage.

I was the only one in the yard when it happened, but I had my back turned, and I didn't know there was anything wrong until I heard the clatter of the mare's hooves and the crack like a shot of a gun when the side of the cart splintered against the iron piers of the gate. I got such a fright I didn't see Jamey at all when I first looked around. I only thought of the mare and of how I could stop her, because after the cart struck the gate the traces broke and she went off in a mad gallop down the lane. I often wondered afterwards that he didn't give a shout or a cry, but maybe it was lost in the clatter of the hooves and the mad rattle of the iron wheels of the cart. Or else maybe it all happened so suddenly he didn't get his breath to shout, but was jolted out of the cart and down the cobbles. Then—oh God, what an awful thing to happen to any man—the wheel of the cart went over him. Over his face they said, but by God's mercy I didn't see that. He must have tried to get up and fallen down again because when I saw him at last he was lying face downward. They said I ran over to him but I don't remember any more than just seeing him lying there in the muck and the dirt with his hands stretched out like as if he was still straining after the reins.

But I knew he was dead. They say I gave a scream and that was all: I fainted: fell down on the wet cobblestones, and didn't come to my senses again until they brought me in and put me down on the sofa in the parlour. But do you know the first words I heard when I came to my senses? It was Agatha who said them:

"If only it hadn't happened in our yard," she said.

That was all it meant to her, that a man was killed, and that man Jamey Morrow who had worked for us for fifteen years, and whom we knew as long back as we could remember, when we were all of us small children going to the National School together.



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I think there was never a time when I didn't know Jamey Morrow and his sister Annie. I remember when their own mother was alive, a poor sickly woman. Our own mother used to take us with her when she went down to the cottage with soup or medicine for the poor woman.

"She's not long for this world," mother used to say, and she used to look at Jamey and Annie, and sigh, and call them poor little orphans.

Poor Mother: it was she who wasn't long for this world. It was we who were soon to be orphans. But that is only one of the ways that things seemed to work out the opposite of what might have been expected.

Who for instance could have thought when this country got its freedom and they began to build ugly little concrete houses with hideous red-tiled roofs for the labourers and farm workers, that a day would come when they would be fitter for human habitation than our farmhouses that were such a source of pride to us.

Then we considered that the countryside was destroyed with these hideous little houses and I remember well my Father's rage when he heard the Morrows had put down their names to get one, and that it was going to be built on the frontage of James Lanigan's farm at a point just opposite to where our lane opened into the road. Just where it would be an eyesore, he said, every time we came down the lane. Even I, who was glad the Morrows were getting away from the damp hovel in the fields where they lived up to that time, even I wished they weren't going to be right at the end of our lane.

We loved the lane so much. We were proud of being nearly a mile back from the road, and as well as knowing that it was our own land to either side of us, we used to love going up and down it on the side-car, especially in summer when the hedges grew as high as walls, and there were pink and white dog roses nodding in the breezes as we tilted to this side and that over the dried ruts in the ground.

I never thought a day would come when places lying back in the fields would be as good as worthless in the eyes of auctioneers and valuers and the people they send down from the city to value a place if you're trying to raise a loan on it, or take out a mortgage.

And as for the dwellinghouse, the very things in which we took the most pride were the things the valuers set least store upon.

They thought the thatch made it a poor proposition altogether and when one of the clerks leant up against the gable and the fresh lime got on his sleeve, he looked at the other man and raised his eyebrows.

I must admit that when these men saw it, our place had begun to go downhill. Father was dead, and Agatha was ailing and even if you had the best intentions in the world, it was hard to get thatchers to come to you. It was a trade that was passing out of existence.

Some of our neighbours had the thatch pulled down and had



their places slated. The Lanigans, our nearest neighbours but one, had their roof slated, and I suppose it looked a bit better than ours which had rotted patches in it and the spouts of green grass growing up through the straw, but it didn't look a whole lot for all that, because they couldn't do anything with the old crooked walls that had somehow or other looked alright with the thatch.

Ah well! I suppose it is kind of comical now to think how we resented the new council houses and said that they spoiled the countryside. To do ourselves justice, I must say that there was never any attempt to make them fit into the countryside. Places like ours and the Lanigans', and others like them, were hedged around with privet and laurel, and in summer wreathed all round the windows and doors with woodbine and roses.

And I must admit that the Morrows' cottage was no better than any other. In fairness to Agatha I must admit that one thing.

The Morrows didn't get a council house until Jamey was almost a grown man. I suppose there being only him and a sister Annie, and both of them unmarried, made the Council pass over them for a long time. But they got one at last.

I remember Agatha and I were away at boarding school when the building of the cottage began, and it was well started when we came home for our holidays one summer.

"What in the name of Providence is that?" cried Agatha, when we came to our lane, and she saw the new walls just opposite to it. "What is the meaning of this?" she cried, looking at my father, but he shrugged his shoulders.

"The Morrows are getting a place at last," he said. "There's nothing we can do about it," and he pressed his lips together, and gave the mare a lick of the whip so that she fairly leapt up the lane.

"I wouldn't mind so much if it was anyone but those Morrows," said Agatha, when she and I were walking down the lane a few days later.

She always hated them. I never knew why, and I don't know now, unless it could be that even then, even before Jamey came to work for us at all, before he was a man you might say, when we were all only youngsters going to school together, she might have seen that there was something in his eyes when he looked at me, that wasn't in them when he looked at her.

And even in those days, when we were youngsters I mean, he seemed to be always crossing our path, as if indeed to provoke her. As I have said we went to the National school when we were little girls, just as all the farmers' children did, until we were old enough to go to boarding school, but whereas the other scholars often had to come three and four miles to the schoolhouse, and often in their bare feet, we, who lived only a short distance from the village, were always brought by the donkey and trap, and brought home in the same manner.

And when I said a few minutes ago that Jamey Morrow was always crossing our path that was literally true because one of the things I remember best about him in those days was the way

he would start up suddenly almost out of nowhere, like a hare it seemed to me then, right in front of the donkey's head, and, with a laugh, dart across the road, to stare at us, in what Agatha called an impudent way, from the high bank on the other side.

"That fool," she used to cry, and once I remember she snatched the whip from the socket and rose up in the trap to lash out at him. But he only laughed, and that day, to goad her, he ran alongside the trap in his bare feet the whole way to the school-house gate. And no matter how Agatha beat the poor animal under the shafts, we could not out-distance his grinning face.

"You fool," cried Agatha in cold fury, as we got to the wall of the school-yard, and with a last grin he vaulted over it. All she could do then was to give a final lash to our wretched donkey whose poor legs were plaiting under him from fatigue.

And here I think I should set down another thing I remember about that day. We used to unhitch the donkey and tie him up in a covered shed at the side of the school-house, with a nose-bag of oats that we brought with us in the trap. Well, on this particular day when we were in school, I began to feel uneasy about the poor animal after such a gallop as we had, and at the first opportunity I went out to take a look at him. But he was more than alright. Someone had put an old bit of sacking across his back to keep him from getting cold after all he sweated. And someone had given him a fistful of grass because there were green blades all around the ground under his feet and stuck between his poor old yellow teeth.

It wasn't Agatha who put that sack over him. It wasn't she who gave him the grass. And it wasn't me. It could only be one person, and when at that minute I felt that there was someone else in the deserted yard I hardly needed to catch a sight of him to know that it was Jamey Morrow.

I suppose, in a way, you might say we were sweethearts as long ago as then, because when our eyes met that day in the empty yard there was the same look in Jamey's eyes that was in them always after that when we were alone.

And I suppose that is why I felt so queer the year we came home from boarding school for good, and father told us that Jamey Morrow had come to him looking for work.

"Jamey Morrow?" I had to sit down on the lid of my trunk; I felt so weak all of a sudden.

And that was nothing to the way I felt the next day when I went into the kitchen for something and there was Jamey standing at the back door with a bucket of calf meal in his hands waiting for mother to scald it. Agatha was with me, but his eyes were on me. He never looked at her at all although she was in front of me, and I, when I saw him, started back into the shadow of a big grain bin we used to keep in the kitchen for the sake of dryness.

Oh, that look! How well I was to know it in the years ahead of me. And how often I was to tremble in case that Agatha too had seen it; or Father.

I know now that Father never saw it, but I think that Agatha was aware of almost every glance that passed between us even



when she was in another room with the thickness of two walls between her and us. But her silence was part of the plan she pursued from the start not to pretend she noticed anything at all.

Even on the day of the inquest, she kept up the same pretence of its not concerning me any more nearly than it would have concerned anyone, to have a man killed in my own yard, in front of my face, you might say.

And, at the last minute in the kitchen, when we were dressed and ready to go to the court-house, and father had the mare hitched to the side-car, I pleaded with her again to let me take off my blue silk dress, she only looked at me coldly, and asked what else I had that I could wear instead of it.

"Anything but this," I cried, in anguish, looking down at the blue dress. It was fitter to wear to a wedding than to an inquest.

But Agatha's cold eyes compelled me to look up at her.

"You know you have nothing else fit to wear on an occasion like this!" she said, "nothing except your old foulard," she added slowly and deliberately.

My foulard was black, unrelieved except by a bit of jet beading on the bodice. It was part of the mourning clothes father bought for us when our mother died about four years before this.

Agatha used to have one like it, but black suited her and she had worn it out in no time, and only lately I had seen her cutting it down into a petticoat. But black never suited me, and I didn't wear mine very often. It was as good as new.

"You know black makes you look a sight," said Agatha, when she saw me still irresolute. "You look bad enough as things are this morning, God knows. Your face is all blotchy, did you know that?"

I suppose I put my hand to my face, but I neither knew nor cared how I looked. And Agatha must have known that too, because in spite of her policy of pretending to know nothing, there were times when her malevolence could not be hidden, but broke out, like now.

"Do you want people to say that you went into mourning for your father's yard-man?" she said.

I suppose that was another time that I ought to have given her an answer: that I ought to have told her how little I cared for what anyone thought about me and Jamey, least of all her that was most responsible for keeping us apart.

But Father was waiting outside on the side-car and the door was open so that he could have heard every word we said, and I was afraid he'd hear me. And there didn't seem to be any gain in upsetting him for nothing, because all the declarations I could ever make would not do Jamey any good, nor could my silence do him any harm. Or so I thought at the time.

That was always my failing; not speaking up to anyone. But it was only that day that I was to learn it was a failing. I used to think it was a good quality. I used to be proud of what I thought was my gentle nature. I used to think that people admired me for it, particularly when they saw that Agatha was so hard.



She was like Father. They were so alike in their ways they were more like man and wife than Father and daughter. But I took after Mother.

Poor, poor Mother. She was always timid, and when she became frail and delicate towards the end of her life, her timidity was almost cowardice. She let Father dominate her in everything, and as for us girls, she was always warning us to avoid saying anything to upset him in case, as she used to say, her voice sinking to a whisper, in case he would get a stroke, and "drop."

Oh, with what dread and fear I was filled by that simple word "drop", when it came like that in a whisper, from my mother's lips. And such is the power of association that, in a storm, I never heard the wind drop without feeling greater terror in my heart than the worst fury of the wind could evoke.

But Agatha evidently did not have the same fears as me of provoking Father's anger, or perhaps she was serene in her knowledge that unless she were to incense him by tales about me, there was nothing in her life that could provoke him to any great degree of anger.

I don't suppose I had much to hide from him either before Jamey came to work for us, but as far back as I can remember I was mortally afraid of my Father. But then I was afraid of Agatha too.

I was like Mother, you see. She was afraid of everything. And I suppose I was taken after her, as they say. Indeed she said as much to me one day shortly before she died. She had taken my hand in hers, that was so thin and white.

"You're like me, Rose," she said.

"I'm glad I'm like you, Mother," I breathed with love and tenderness. She looked at me, as if in pity, as if in remorse, and then she turned her head to one side, and I saw that her face was wet with tears.

"What is the matter, Mother?" I cried, but all she could do was shake her head from side to side as if in admonition.

As if there was anything I could do then, or at any time, to make me other than I was. I suppose what happened at the inquest only proved that if I had a hundred lives to live I would have been the same cowardly creature all the time; and Jamey's dogged perseverance would have gained him nothing in the end, no matter how long he lived.

I would never have had the courage to face up to Father; to Agatha; to the whole countryside, and let it be thrown in my face that I'd go down to live in the cottage that I sneered at so much when it was being built. And I couldn't bring myself to think of such a thing, although there was many a time since then, and the thought of ever standing in one of those small rooms with Jamey beside me, was like thinking of a caress because, for all our love, we never stood as near together as those close and narrow walls would bring us.

We were never alone for longer than a few uneasy minutes, when we exchanged no more than a few uneasy words, while I scoured the milking pails for him perhaps, or worked the handle

of the pump while he rinsed them round with spring water. At such times Agatha was never far away; in the dairy, perhaps, or else gone down the passage for something: to return in a few seconds. But they were long terrible moments for all that, when some pull seemed to be exerting itself between us, so that I often had to catch hold of something, the table, or the back of a chair, in order to keep from moving nearer to him, or putting out my hand to touch him. Whether it was something outside us that made me feel this pull towards him, or whether it was exerted upon me deliberately by his eyes that were always full upon me whenever I encountered him, I do not know. I only know that after such moments passed, and Jamey had gone, or, more likely when someone had come upon us, although my heart beat wildly at the thought of what the moment had presaged, I was always glad that things were to remain vague for another while.

And so one summer after another came and went, and left us as it found us. And the cold hard winters came, and although they were longer in passing, they too passed and left us unchanged in any way.

Oh, how bitter it was afterwards to think of those hard winters Jamey endured, up at all hours of the night with ewes at lambing time, and yet first astir in the yard at frosty dawn. Many and many a time my heart was stabbed at the sight of him going about his labours, caked to the knees with mud, his clothes shapeless from all the wettings he got and the poor means he had of drying them.

It was some comfort to think of the few times, in the bitterest of the weather, that I got a chance to call him to the kitchen window and hand him out a cup of hot tea when Agatha was occupied elsewhere. But for the most part the winters were hard and bitter for him. And but for me it's likely he would not have stayed in such a backward place.

Of course in the summer it didn't seem so backward, and in our part the summer used to come so suddenly that overnight it would seem to reach full tide, the hedges all in blossom, and the cattle in the pastures wading in through great billows of grass, as if in through water, while all at once the meadows were breast high, so high indeed that once, as we went down the lane in the side-car and saw a man walking down the path that ran through our meadow, it was only when the wind swayed the grasses that it could be seen that by the hand he held a little girl in a pink sunbonnet!

Oh, the summers were beautiful; the summers were bountiful; they seemed to be made for lovers.

As each summer broke over the countryside, it seemed to me that surely, surely it would be different from others, and that somehow Jamey and I would get over our difficulties and be able to settle our differences.

I used to forget Agatha. I used to forget Father. But above all, I used to forget that there had been other summers when the hedges were just as thick with roses and that then, too, the grass had risen in the fields like a flood. Yet all these summers had

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passed and we were as we had always been; no nearer to each other.

So many summers!

Only a few days before Jamey was killed, I was standing at the door of the kitchen, and although the summer had not yet come, here and there, like a spray of foam breaking before its time, far out upon a distant wave, the hawthorn had broken into blossom.

"The summer is nearly here," said Jamey, rolling the water slowly round and round in the milk pail, and not looking at me at all.

"It makes me sad to think of the summer coming," I said. He stopped rolling the can.

"I was thinking of summers long ago," I said. "when I was a child."

He looked at me then. Instinctively I drew back into the shelter of the back porch, and the old feeling of nervousness came over me so much that I trembled. Agatha had only gone down the passage to the dairy: we could hear the sound of the clappers as she made up the butter.

But Jamey seemed reckless that day. He left down the milk-can and came a step or two after me as I withdrew still further into the porch.

"Why think of the summers that are gone?" he said. "Why not think of the summers ahead?"

One would have thought those words were simple enough, and harmless too, but I read their deeper import so clearly that, terrified, I glanced over my shoulder in case they might have been overheard, and when I looked back again I saw on his face another look with which I was becoming familiar, but to which I could not give a name: it was not pity; it was not contempt. Perhaps the nearest I could go to naming it would be to say it was a look of accusation. And his voice when he spoke again had lost the eager note it had first held, and was flat and dull.

"More have gone than are to come," he said.

Then he lifted the pail from the ground and going back to the pump the clatter he made filled the yard.

Looking after him that day my heart was heavy. That is all there is between us, I thought, or ever like to be: looks of love, and looks of accusation.

Agatha was a long time in the dairy that evening after all. I need not have been so cautious. Yet when she came back into the kitchen a half-an-hour later, you'd almost think our voices had left traces in the air from the way she stood on the threshold with the bowl of buttermilk in her arms: looking around her suspiciously.

"Who was that?" she asked, but she knew without being told that it was Jamey. "It's well for you," she said, "that you have nothing more to do than give chat to the like of that fellow!"

That was Agatha's attitude from the start; to ignore the implications of the situation that was developing, and give her attention instead to surface irregularities; the way I idled, or the way



Jamey muddled the floor when he came into the kitchen.

It was indeed hard at times to know whether or not she suspected anything. Sometimes it seemed impossible to think that she did not. On the other hand what had ever passed between Jamey and me behind Agatha's back that might not have passed between us in her presence? Nothing; unless perhaps those looks, those inflammable, dangerous looks, that showed how near the surface was the fire that could consume us all. Because, of course, Agatha and Father would never be able to hold up their heads again if I ran away with Jamey Morrow.

Not that our plans had ever been put like that in plain words. Poor Jamey, he hadn't the right to speak plainly. I had never given him that right. But what was in his mind could not be stifled, and that there was a purpose and a meaning behind every word he uttered. There was one day, when he came to the door of the kitchen, and called me by name, recklessly, not caring if he was overheard. By good chance we were alone.

"Did you hear the news?" he asked, his eyes bright and piercing as they searched my face.

I hadn't heard anything strange.

"About Molly Lanigan," said Jamey.

I had heard nothing, but of course I knew at once what was coming.

"And Andy Fagan?" I asked.

Jamey nodded his head excitedly.

"They've run away?" I whispered.

Jamey nodded his head again, an exultant look on his face.

"Australia!" he cried, and his voice also was exultant.

"But —"

I was so bewildered, so disturbed. Molly Lanigan was the daughter of James Lanigan, my father's friend, and the way of life conducted in the Lanigan home was in many respects the same as our own.

Perhaps old Lanigan was not as proud as our Father, and did not set such a high standard for his womenfolk, allowing them to walk to Mass sometimes rather than take out the trap, particularly if the day was wet, and taking less heed of their appearance in the house too, with the result that Molly Lanigan sometimes went around the kitchen in the morning with old trodden-down slippers on her feet, or went about the yard in muddy weather with a pair of her Father's old boots on her feet, unpolished and unlaced. But whatever might have been old Lanigan's laxity in these respects, he and Father saw eye to eye when it came to estimating the difference between themselves and the labouring class. Old Lanigan especially was greatly incensed at the scheme for giving them cottages.

"You'll see," he said. "All this will end badly. It will put them above themselves. A day will come when we won't be able to get one of them to lift a spade. More than that: you'll see the day when they'll be so full of themselves they'll be setting their caps at the farmers' daughters, and looking for wives among them."

Molly Lanigan was with her father that day, and how she and

I giggled until we saw Agatha looking down her nose at us!

Molly was as pretty as a rose, with her soft mossy hair, and her soft tinted cheeks with pink coming and going in them. People often said we were alike, Molly and I, but of course I wasn't anything like as pretty as Molly. All the same, people fancied they saw a likeness between us, and we were often taken for sisters. We were more like sisters than Agatha and me, anyway, and I suppose that's what people meant. I felt more sisterly towards Molly: that was certain anyway.

After we left school though we didn't see each other very often. And then one day Agatha brought up her name with a glitter of malice in her eyes as she spoke of her, because Agatha never liked Molly either, any more than she liked any friends of mine.

"This is a nice state of affairs," she said. "I hear people are beginning to talk about Molly Lanigan!"

I had heard some talk about Molly. In fact Jamey had hinted something to me about her, but I didn't dream that she would ever go as far as to give people grounds for talking openly about her like this. Father, who had evidently heard nothing, turned to Agatha with a look of concern and inquiry.

"They're talking about the way she's carrying on with one of the workmen," said Agatha.

So it was true. All at once I felt a strange feeling in my heart that I could not name. Then, with shame, I realised that the feeling was jealousy.

"Molly and Andy Fagan!" I murmured, more to myself than to the others, more to hear if, coupled together, their names would seem less ill-assorted than were their persons.

My Jamey was so different from Andy, I told myself hastily, because I could not help feeling that for the one thing that united them, there must be a hundred things that would divide them. It would take Andy Fagan a long time to rise above his origins. But anyone would have to admit that, even in his old working clothes, up to his knees in mud, Jamey was a cut above a labourer.

But to go back to Molly and Andy, I thought that whatever was between them had been brought to an end, because not long after Agatha's malicious talk about her, Molly was packed off to Dublin to stay with a sister of her father's who had the name of being a very strict woman.

It was easy to see what was at the back of this move. Poor Molly was in Dublin for almost two years, without once being let home for a few days. You'd have thought that would have put an end to anything there had been between her and Andy, and that was why I was so taken by surprise when Jamey told me about them going to Australia.

"But she was sent to Dublin to get her away from him," I cried. I couldn't understand how they managed things at all.

Jamey gave a short laugh.

"That was old Lanigan's mistake," he said. "If he had left her at home he might have furthered his own plans better."

I didn't understand him and I told him so.

"If he left her at home, it's likely she'd have found poor Fagan was driving too hard a bargain, between what he had to offer and what she would have to give up for him," he said, and he paused for a minute, and then he gave me a look I'll remember till the day I die. "Like others before her," he said.

Do you see what I mean now about the way he was always hinting and insinuating, without ever daring to speak outright?

"I wonder will they ever come back," I said, nervously, stupidly, if you like, because I wanted to change the conversation. I didn't altogether succeed, for Jamey kept looking at me for another minute, that I thought would never end, and then he looked behind me at the yard, and the ramshackle pump against the gable wall, and at the dreary stretches of mud that lay between one shed and another.

"Is it back to a place like this?" he said, because at that time of year one place was like another in the heart of the country. He looked around him again and he gave a laugh. I didn't like that laugh. And I didn't like the look I saw on his face; it was not the familiar dogged look I used to know. I couldn't give it a name at all, but I felt a faint stirring of fear. I thought that I knew Jamey better than I knew anyone belonging to me. At times it seemed to me that I was more kin to him than I was to either Agatha or Father, with their long sallow faces and their light coloured eyes.

It would never surprise me to see a strange expression on their faces. But on Jamey's face I expected to see nothing but that with which I was familiar as long as I could remember.

That was why I felt frightened all of a sudden. The thought crossed my mind that for all his dogged devotion, he might take a notion some day and walk out of the place—without me.

Indeed when he was gone from me, I had one gleam of consolation in the thought that it was not by any act of his will or of mine that we were parted.

This was the thought that was uppermost in my mind on the day we rattled along the road to the inquest. It made me feel less bitter towards Agatha for a time, and more pitying, because after all, I had my memories, and I thought no one could take them away from me.

I was thinking of how, when the day was ended, and twilight began to descend on the countryside, I would wander across the fields to the old cemetery in which Jamey had been laid beside his parents. And kneeling down among the cool grasses I would whisper to him all the words of love that I had never spoken.

Ah Jamey, I would cry. Ah Jamey! And I would tell him all my love; tell him how I stifled it, and how I suffered from it. And so deep was my feeling of love that I thought Agatha or Father must surely notice me. I had to clench my hands together to prevent me from pressing them to my heart.

Father noticed something all right I think, because he looked at me sharply.

"Hold on to the rails there," he said roughly. "Do you want to be thrown out on the road?"



I hardly heeded him. In my mind I was still kneeling, penitent, in the moist grasses of the graveyard, at evening time.

Jamey, forgive me!

Ah Jamey, if only I had you back again I'd go to the ends of the earth with you!

But in spite of my dreaming I became aware at last that we had reached the outskirts of the town, and, for the first time I began to apprehend the embarrassment of the occasion.

"There are a lot of people in the town to-day," I said, addressing Agatha although between us two of late there had been a certain constraint.

I hardly thought she would answer me, but she did.

"What did you expect?" she said, stonily. "They're here to gape at us!"

I suppose it was because of my absorption in my own feelings that I had not given much thought to the inquest. Now, however, at the last minute, I was filled with a nervous curiosity.

"Will we be asked questions?" I cried.

Agatha looked contemptuously at me.

"Why do you suppose they're bringing us here?" she said.

All at once my heart began to beat violently.

"They won't ask me anything, will they?" I cried.

Here, however, Father turned around and looked at me in surprise.

"You'll be the principal witness, didn't you know that?" He turned fully around to me, although we were in the town now, and the mare had to pick her way carefully in the crowded streets. Then he looked at Agatha. "Didn't you tell her she'd be the first witness?"

But Agatha hadn't told me. And all of a sudden I felt that there was something strange about her not having told me. There was something strange about her silence, now too, as if in it something were breeding; something evil and bad. Even Father looked suspiciously at her.

Agatha only shrugged her shoulders.

"She's not a fool, is she?" she muttered. "Doesn't she know she was the only one in the yard when it happened?"

But Father didn't seem satisfied.

"All the same," he said, "I thought you were going to talk to her?"

We had by this time rounded the corner of the Main Street, at the end of which was the Court-house. And going down the street, a pathetic figure in her cheap black clothes, was Annie Morrow. I'd have to make an opportunity to speak to her. I thought, but it was for Jamey's sake I'd do it, because to tell the truth, there was as much difference between him and her as—well, as I suppose people would have said there was between him and me if they had been given an occasion for talking about us.

But I was full of pity for her all the same, in spite of her mean appearance and her badly made clothes.

"There's Annie Morrow," I said aloud. "I suppose they'll have to ask her questions too."

I thought my Father at least would have felt some pity for her.

Instead, he averted his proud, hard face, as if he did not want to see her.

"You'll find she'll be well able to answer all she's asked," he said. "Too well," he added, after a minute, when he had left her behind us.

I didn't know what he meant.

"You can't be so stupid that you don't know the Morrrows and their friends will throw all the blame of this thing upon us," he said after a minute.

"But it was an accident," I cried. "How could there be blame put upon anyone?"

Father gave a jerk to the reins.

"It's easily seen you know little about the Morrrows or their class," he said. "They're always looking out for a chance to put down their betters. Don't you know they'll say the whole thing was due to some fault of ours; that the harness was bad or the mare was wicked, or some other such lie!"

I didn't think that anyone would go out of his way or her way to tell a deliberate lie like that, much less in a Courthouse where they'd be on their oath to tell the truth. But I didn't know either that a lie could take all kinds of forms, and that you could tell one just by saying nothing at all.

"I don't believe Annie Morrow would tell a lie," I cried. "Can't we prove the harness was alright anyway. And as for the mare, doesn't everyone know our mare? Doesn't everyone know that she's quiet?"

As a matter of fact we were drawing up at the door of the Courthouse by this time, and all Father would have to do when we got down from the sidecar would be to make a knot in the reins and throw it into the well of the car. The mare would stand in the shafts all day if she was asked. She'd stand there in the street outside the Courthouse without being held or tied or anything. There wasn't a horse in the countryside that was as quiet as all that.

"Everyone knows our mare," I cried, as I prepared to get down on to the footpath. It was not till then that Agatha spoke.

"The best animal in the world would turn sour if she was badly treated," she said in her cold, cold voice.

I got such a strange feeling that I was not able to get down from the trap. I sank back on the worn leather cushions.

"You don't mean that Jamey ill-treated her?" I said, almost in a whisper.

Agatha shrugged her shoulders.

"Who knows!" she said.

I found my voice then.

"Agatha Darker!" I cried. "You know very well that Jamey Morrow never ill-treated an animal in his life!" But as I saw her cold sneering face I turned around to Father. "You know it, don't you, Father?" I cried.

He was putting a knot in the reins. He threw the knotted

leather into the well of the car. Then he turned to answer me.

"It isn't what we know, or do not know, but what we saw or did not see that will count in here," he said, and before he put the whip into its socket, he motioned towards the Courthouse with it. "You were the only one in the yard when the accident happened," he said. "If you say he didn't kick the animal they'll take your word for it; that's all there is to say about the matter. Come on! Get down."

But I didn't get down. I felt so weak I knew my feet would go from under me if I tried to stand, much less to walk up through the crowd that was gathering at the Courthouse door, and all of them staring at us too, with a hostile kind of stare. I recognised one or two of them as labouring men that were working on farms around about us. And I recognised two girls that were cousins of the Morrows. You'd have thought they would have been a bit sober looking at such a time, but instead of that they had a saucy impudent look about them, as if the proceedings in the Courthouse gave them some sort of importance.

I could not help noticing when my sister Agatha got down from the side-car on to the footpath, they lost a lot of their impudence. Agatha always had that effect upon people. She made them uncomfortable. The girls shrank back from her, as, with her head erect, she prepared to go into the Courthouse.

"Agatha!" I cried. She was my sister after all. Those people crowding around us were not our kind, and although I didn't want to side with Agatha and Father, I didn't want to side with them either. After all, I had to live with Agatha and Father, and now that Jamey was gone from me, I'd have to live with them for the rest of my life.

"Oh Agatha!" I cried. "Why do I have to answer questions? After all, I didn't see anything that happened. You and Father saw more than me! It was only when you ran out into the yard and I saw you put your hand up to your face that I looked around and saw him on the ground. And didn't I faint after that? What good will it do them to ask me about it? I saw nothing!"

I did not know it then, but this was the moment for which Agatha was waiting all that day.

She turned back immediately. Taking my arm she helped me down from the side-car, and then, linking her arm in mine, she pressed me close to her, as we made our way up the steps of the Courthouse together, between the rows of gaping faces on either side of us.

For the first time in many years I began to think of her as a friend.

"Of course you saw nothing," she said. "That's why it was so absurd of you to keep insisting that he couldn't have done anything to the mare! How did you know what happened! He could have kicked her a dozen times without you seeing him. We all know it is most unlikely that he did anything of the kind, but you couldn't swear he didn't, could you? Don't forget that you'll be on your oath!"

We were at the Courthouse at this time, but we had not gone in



because we were waiting for Father to join us.

"You couldn't swear he didn't, could you?" said the voice beside me.

At that moment Father came up the steps.

"Could you?" said my sister again. And this time I shook my head.

But oh, the cleverness and malice that led me to that betrayal! Is it any wonder that I hated her from that moment to this moment, and that I will hate her until the last moment of my life on this earth.

And to think that when my last hour comes that it will be by her side that I will be laid in the earth, and with her dust that mine will mingle. I, Rose Darker, that should by rights be laid alongside Jamey Morrow!

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A SUNDAY WALK

MICHAEL hated Sunday afternoons, and particularly this one. There was always a depressing puritanical air about them; there were no shops open, everyone looked irritatingly respectable and went for walks. He had always hated walks, at least the Sunday afternoon sort, when father, mother, brother Jack and sister Jill walked sedately along one suburban road, round the corner, past the shops, and back by another suburban road to a tea of cold roast and scones. There was something unimaginative and vaguely hypocritical about Sunday walks, something inexplicably dreary, but on this Sunday there seemed nothing else to do but—well—go for a Sunday afternoon walk.

So he left the house. He passed the Town Hall and walked on to the branching of the road. "That one goes up Rathgar," he thought, "but where does this one go to? It must go somewhere—the 'bus goes that way. Funny how I've been in Dublin for nearly three months and have never gone farther than this."

He could still hardly realise that he was in Dublin. Only a few months before he had been at home in Cork, dreaming of Dublin, wistfully looking at the advertisements in the daily papers, thinking of the crowds in O'Connell Street, of climbing the Pillar, going to the Abbey, seeing Grafton Street shops and feeling the pulse of cosmopolitan life. It would be wonderful to go to Dublin for the first time. And yet now he was here, he wanted to be back in Cork, looking out the window of their house high up in Montenotte at the lights across the Marina in Douglas or Ballinlough, or down in the heart of the city, or sitting on the garden steps reading, occasionally glancing away down at the ships on the river. Cork was sunny, intimate, warm, lovable; Dublin was dreary, cold, overwhelming, lonely. He knew nobody, although he was beginning to know a few in the office, or as many as his retiring manner would allow. They were friendly enough there, and the office work was easy, but the monotony of it was unbearable, the endless routine, the eternal surge and noise of Dame Street below, the hurrying for 'buses. Out here in the suburbs it was quieter.

"I'll go this way," he decided. A green enamel plate on the wall said 'Rathmines Rd. Upper.' He tightened the belt of his raincoat—he could feel the damp air getting in. The footpath was wet and there were rotting fallen yellow and brown leaves on it. It was late October.

He passed big houses and small houses, all very respectable and all of red brick, and at the corner he saw a sign, 'Dartry Road.' Down below to the left was a bridge, and new houses and half-built ones, but not a sign of fields or of countryside. He wanted to get out in the country. It was too late at the time of

the year to get any wildflowers, his only interest besides books. "There should be a lot of flowers here I didn't see at home. I must get out Colgan's 'Flora of County Dublin' from the library, and next summer I'll go botanising—it should tell me where to get the bee-orchid and Grass of Parnassus and yellow centaury and in—what else grows in Dublin?—oh yes, London Rocket in the city and Geranium sanguineum and viper's bugloss and quaking-grass and all the rest of them. Not much out this time of the year." There wasn't a sign of a field anywhere, so it made no difference what season it was.

"Does Dublin ever end? Will I walk on and on and still see nothing but houses?" It wasn't like Cork. You had only to go out along the Montenotte road to Mayfield and there you were, right among the fields and hedges and little streams. You could get frog-spawn and water-cress and spotted orchises and chestnuts there all in turn. You could find wagtails' nests and all kinds of wildflowers (it was there he found his first Autumn Ladies' Tresses, such a funny name, and another with an even funnier technical one, stratiated hispid Jarnicaroma) and moss-roses and sometimes even a hedgehog rolled up among leaves, in the fields that sloped down to the river at Tivoli. But here—ah! Nothing at all except bricks and houses and builders' heaps, and everyone so prim and respectable. "Just look at all those stuffy idiots out for their Sunday walk. Look at that fellow, afraid to look behind him in case he'd take the creases out of his best suit. And that complacent hag with her peke! They're walking just because it's Sunday and because everyone else is doing it too."

He stopped suddenly and gave a little laugh. Was he not being a bit intolerant? What was he himself doing? Why, going for a Sunday walk just like all the rest. With a shock he realised that maybe he was becoming settled and complacent like all these people. Was it the atmosphere of Dublin and the suburbs? Even his accent was changing gradually, imperceptibly. Already they were telling him in the office that he was beginning to lose his southern lilt, and that he'd soon be a real Jackeen.

Anyhow, he could not spend the whole day in that awful lodginghouse, listening to the landlady banging vessels in the kitchen at the other side of the wall. It would be impossible to sit in his room and gaze at those atrocities of pictures which covered the walls. In his mind he could see the room, with its pictures, as he walked down the hill towards the bridge.

There was one picture of 'Night on the Thames'; a wedding group; several holy pictures; 'Spaniels at Play'; 'A Leafy Glade'; 'Bless This House' with flowers round the edge; 'Summer Follies' (two dribbling loathsome children of undetermined sex with sinister faces "frolicking" in a hayfield, with daisy-chains and monstrous sun-bonnets on); 'Dawn in the Highlands' and, worst of all, 'Jacqueline,' a pink-and-yellow horror of a flat-chested spindle-legged female peeping demurely from under a 1926 pot-hat. Of all these *objets d'art*, Jacqueline was the most hate-inspiring as she smiled coyly at him from the wall near



the corner of the room. How could anyone stay in that room for a whole Sunday afternoon?

"I'd love a smoke," he suddenly thought. It was only when he was in one of his critical moods that he smoked. At other times he never thought about cigarettes. But just now he wanted to criticise everything and everybody, and that was impossible without inhaling furious puffs of smoke. Down by the bridge was a little shop, 'Licensed to sell tobacco.' Michael searched his pockets for money and discovered a total of one and five-pence. They had nothing in the shop but unpopular brands with varied and weird names, but he bought some, and a box of matches.

Across the bridge over the Dodder were more houses on one side, but that looked like a field on the other. Yes, that was the road to go, up the hill to see what that field was like. His left shoe began to hurt him. It was too narrow, or else his foot was too wide. ("You have big, big *spaug*s like your uncle," they used to say to him at home).

"This must be Dartry. Getting nearer the country now at last; the houses are getting smaller, more proletarian than the ones up above. Oh Lord, that's not a field. It's a golf course—big enough it is too, acres and acres. What does the notice say? 'Milltown Golf Club.'" The golf course stretched all along by the road on one side, houses on the other. He stopped to light a cigarette, and looked over a low wall into one of the gardens. There was a long bed of vivid orange marigolds growing on either side of the cement path up to the door. He stared. "Lord Almighty! Aren't they hideous? Bright, disgusting awful orange. What a colour!" He checked himself and stopped. "I am a bit critical today. Becoming too artistic and aesthetic, etc. It must be the influence of 'Rathmines'!"—'Rathmines' sounded so nice, ultra-respectable. At home they had been pleased when he had written from his Rathmines address. He could imagine his mother saying to a visitor or a neighbour, "Michael is in Dublin now, you know. Yes, in a clerical job in Dame Street. He's staying out in Rathmines, such a swanky place. Oh, he loves it . . ."

Well, anyhow, those marigolds were frightful, an eye-sore. The garden would look better if planted with potatoes. The next garden was hardly any better—a diamond-shaped bed of bedraggled antirrhinums. Everyone seemed to have antirrhinums. And usually a big crop of voracious weeds sprang up and nobody bothered to pull them. Why *should* anyone pull them out? Mr. O'Toole next door didn't pull his out, and Mr. O'Toole is a 'terrible nice man.' The lines of bedding-plants were planted in the spring, just as everyone else had done, and nobody could say that Mrs. Byrne's husband wasn't a good gardener. So the weeds didn't matter. Michael thought all these things as he gazed at the weeds. He liked weeds—at least when compared with things like antirrhinums. They were nearer to nature, they didn't have to be dibbled into the lines of holes by Mr. Byrne, there was something fresh and redolent of the

countryside about them. Even their names were pleasant and unusual. There was groundsel and chickweed and persicary and a patch of dog's mercury ("something Rabelaisian about that name") and isolated plants of the little lurid-flowered spurge. Spurge! "What a lovely terse musical descriptive name," he thought. "Something very complete about it. And there's some poem about the spurge too—who was it by? Rossetti, was it?" He tried to remember the poem.

"My eyes wide open had the run  
Of some ten weeds to fix upon  
La-la, la-la, out of the sun:  
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one."

"Three cups in one! How nice, how pre-Raphaelite! Yes, it must be Rossetti. Spurge, cups, poison and Circe; Titian-haired women with sad pale ethereal faces, longing looks."

"Oh, damn that shoe. I'll soon have corns (such a disgusting word—'corns.') Some people have a cult of corns. Like the old shawlies in the Coal Quay. 'How's de corns today, Lizzie?' 'Oh, not too bad at all, Jul'a girl. I pulled wan out last night. De pain was something crool. Dem corns has me heart broke.'

"That's the way I'll soon be, me heart broke, if this shoe keeps hurting me. I'll have to wear my black ones. Oh, *that* garden now isn't too bad, except for the 'rockery.' A heap of soil, seven round stones, and *Cerastium tomentosum*. The gentle art of horticulture! That's what I should have done—horticulture. Four-year course in the Uni. Something better than a Dame Street office. Interesting. Become a County Instructor, tell the farmers when to spray their apple-trees. Give beekeeping lectures."

As he strolled along, Michael remembered their garden in Montenotte. It was steep and sunny. He had reclaimed all the waste parts round the edges and made little rockeries and terraced beds and all kinds of lovely alpine in them. He could see them now in his mind quite clearly, with a sort of nostalgia. It was funny thinking of them on a Dublin road. Up at the top grew saxifrages and androsaces and gentians, and in the fissures of the tiny dry-walls were cobweb-houseleeks and stonecrops ("The yellow level of the stonecrop's bed" said George Crabbe). And in the shady corners near the steps were clumps of violet *Ramondias*, *crystopteris* fern and other treasures. And dwarf azaleas and heathers, and a beautiful plant of white *St. Dabeoc's* Heath. But recently Ann had got a pet hen (most unheard of and incongruous for Montenotte) and it had probably scratched up some of the plants by now.

He stopped. Another road met this one obliquely, cutting the golf course in two. The cypress hedge was interrupted here for a while and he could see the leather-jacketed golfers plodding lethargically in various directions, followed by dutiful caddies. He leaned over the low wall and watched them in the distance. The grass seemed to be wet and the trees away at the other side

of the course seemed vague and blue in the cold October atmosphere. He suddenly thought, for no apparent reason, of warm sand-dunes near Castlegregory in Kerry. He was there once. Then he looked at the golfers again. A young couple passed on the footpath behind him, and he turned and gazed after them. They were going slowly and obviously had no objective in mind—just out for a Sunday walk. The girl was ogling and gazing up at her partner's face, and he squeezed her tenderly as they zig-zagged carelessly along the path. "Silly idiots," Michael murmured.

"When I'm old and retired I'll have a house in West Cork, above the road between Bantry and Glengariff, with beautiful flowering shrubs and trees round it and natural rock-gardens and furze and heather and trickling streamlets from the mountain-bogs behind, and I'll call it 'Mo Theaghlach'. When I wake in the morning I'll be able to see away out over Bantry Bay to Bere Island and Whiddy and Hungry Hill and the broad Atlantic. And when I want—oh, sorry, I beg your par——"

Michael looked down at the little urchin who had run into him, and decided he had wasted his apologies. As the child trotted away unconcernedly, he noticed that it was getting dark and cold.

"It must be nearly six o'clock. Time to go back. That old harridan will have the tea ready."

He was tired, and the shoe still hurt him, and Rathmines seemed a long way behind. He would have to take a 'bus back. He smiled. "Funny ending to a Sunday-afternoon walk, going back by 'bus." There was a 'bus at the stop and it was just moving off as he hopped on it. He went upstairs and sighed as he sat in the back seat.



# PATRICK GALVIN

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## *THE CONNIE RIBBON*

Born to the ice of the Evergreen wind,  
Saint Vincent's shadow crossed the floor.  
Born to the dock and the bare Autumn tree  
The second son of a second idle son.

Sitting on the quay wall with knees up  
Watching the still ghost of timber and corn sails  
Creep up the river from Roche's Point.  
This was the gay lad wearing his Connie Ribbon.

And the quay slept while dockers warmed their hands with stale  
    breath,  
A bare quay empty as dockers bellies  
And the air was stiff like Murphy  
As the Innisfallen blew farewell to the white clock.

This was the wondering lad  
As Saltie's crew rowed down the river to light the salmon  
And the shawlie sang her wild song :  
Innisfallen, Innisfallen leave the cold hungry quay.

    Hello, hello, O wear your Connie Ribbon,  
    Wear it like the devil, far across the sea  
    And if they ask you why you think to wear it,  
    Say you wear it for a lassie, far far away.

Sleeping by the City Hall clock  
And listening to the numbers sing : I am big ben;  
The Red bridge reaches for the solace of frosted stars  
And the Blue bridge swings sideways to the wide Mall.

So signs, the traffic is all held up  
And the General's ass grows tired of waiting.  
He flies like a saintly shaggy bird over the river  
To die, to sleep till awakened by the General's boggy curse.

And Mrs. McGrah would never like that  
Though her daughter wore an Irish sergeant's hat.  
Yet she never saw her labouring duck grow tall  
While the darling of Ireland died on the Union walls.

## IRISH WRITING

Hello, hello, take off your Connie Ribbon,  
Take off your Connie Ribbon and throw it in the sea,  
And if they ask you why you never wear it,  
Say you're thinking of a lassie, far far away.

I speak now to the wild October seed  
For Vincent's steps made me her yellowing harvest.  
I speak now for the cold hands of my mad Father,  
My stone mad thundering Father of Rock.

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The 'Connie Ribbon' is a talisman. Sometimes it is a badge worn to show conformity and subservience. Sometimes it is a love-token. If the latter, then each of the lovers would wear a ribbon, he in his hat, and she round her neck; these ribbons were able to summon the image of the beloved far away. If feelings had changed on either side, no image would appear, and in such a case both parties were supposed to throw their ribbon into the sea—should the image then appear in the water, there had been a mistake and the ribbon had to be retrieved.

## FRANK O'CONNOR

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### THE IDEALIST

**R**EADING? I was never struck on it. It never did anything for me but get me into trouble.

Adventure stories weren't so bad, but as a kid I was very serious and always preferred realism to romance. School stories were what I liked best. The trouble was that even they seemed to be a bit far-fetched, judging by our standards. The schools were English and quite different to the one I attended. They were always called 'the venerable pile', and there was usually a ghost in them; they were built in a square that was called the 'quad', and, to judge by the pictures, were all clock-towers, spires and pinnacles like the lunatic asylum with us. The fellows in the stories were all good climbers, and used to get in and out of the school at night on ropes made of knotted sheets. They dressed queerly; they wore long trousers, short jackets and top-hats. When they did anything wrong they were given 'lines'. When it was a bad case they were flogged, and never showed any sign of pain, only the bad fellows, and they always said 'Ow! Ow!'

Mostly, they were grand chaps who always stuck together and were great at football and cricket. They never told lies, and anyone who did, they wouldn't talk to him. If they were caught out and asked a point-blank question, they always told the truth, unless someone else was in it along with them, and then wild horses wouldn't get them to split, even if the other fellow was a thief, which, as a matter of fact, he frequently was. It was surprising in such good schools, with fathers who never gave them less than five quid, the number of thieves there were. The fellows I knew hardly ever stole, even though they only got a penny a week, and sometimes not even that when their fathers were on the booze and their mothers had to go to the pawn.

I worked hard at the football and cricket, though of course, we never had a proper football, and the sort of cricket we played was with a hurley stick against a wicket chalked on some wall. The officers in the barrack played proper cricket, and I used to go up on summer evenings to see them.

Even so, I couldn't help being disgusted at the bad way things were run in our school. Our venerable pile was a red-brick building without tower or pinnacle a fellow could climb, and no ghost at all; we had no team, so a fellow, no matter how hard he worked, could never play for the school, and nobody had ever thought of giving us lines. Instead Murderer Molony either lifted you by the ears or bashed you with a cane.

But these were only the superficial things. What was really wrong was ourselves. The fellows sucked up to the masters and told them everything that went on. If they were caught out they tried to put the blame on somebody else, even if it meant telling lies. If they were caned, they snivelled and said it wasn't fair: drew



back their hands the least shade as if they were terrified, so that the cane only caught the top of their fingers, and then screamed and stood on one leg, and shook their fingers out in hopes of getting it counted as one. Finally they roared that their wrist was broken, and crawled back to their desks with their hands squeezed under their armpits, howling. I mean, you couldn't help feeling ashamed, imagining what chaps from a decent school would think if they saw it.

My way to school led me past the barrack gate. In those peaceful days the English sentries never minded you going past the guard-room to have a look; if you came at dinner-time they even called you in and gave you plumduff and tea. Naturally, with such a temptation on my way I was often late. When you were late, the only excuse, short of a letter from your mother, was to say you were at early Mass. The Murderer would never know whether you were or not, and if he did anything to you, you could easily get him into trouble with the parish priest. Even as kids we all knew who the real boss of the school was.

But after I had started reading school stories I was always a bit uneasy about saying I was at Mass. It was a lie, and I knew the chaps in the stories would never have told it. They were all round me like invisible presences, and I hated to do anything they wouldn't approve of.

One morning I was very late.

'What kept you till this hour, Regan?' asked Murderer Molony, looking at the clock.

I wanted to say I was at Mass but I couldn't. The invisible presences were all round me.

'I delayed at the barrack, sir,' I said in panic.

There was a faint giggle from the class and Molony raised his brows in mild surprise. He was a big powerful man with fair hair and blue eyes and a manner which at times was deceptively mild.

'Oh, indeed?' he said politely enough. 'And what did you do that for?'

'I was watching the soldiers drilling, sir,' said I.

The class giggled again. This was a new line entirely for them. I suppose it was the first time anyone ever told the truth in that class. Besides, Molony had a dead set on the English.

'Oh,' said Molony casually, 'I never knew you were such a military man. Hold out your hand!'

Compared with the laughter the slaps were nothing and I did not flinch. I returned to my desk slowly and quietly without snivelling or squeezing my hands, and the Murderer looked after me, raising his brows again as much as to say that this was a new line for him too. But the other fellows gaped and whispered as if I were some strange animal. At playtime they all gathered round me, full of excitement.

'Regan, why did you say that about the barrack?'

'Because 'twas true,' I replied firmly. 'I wasn't going to tell him a lie.'

'What lie?'

'That I was at Mass.'

'Then couldn't you say you had to go on a message?'

'That would be a lie too.'

'Cripes, Regan,' they said, 'you'd better mind yourself. The Murderer is in an awful wax. He'll massacre you.'

I knew that only too well. I could see that the man's professional pride had been deeply hurt, and for the rest of the day I was on my best behaviour. But my best was not sufficient for the occasion, for I under-rated the Murderer's guile. From the frown on his face he seemed to be puzzled over something in a book he was reading, and even when he spoke, in a low quiet voice, he scarcely raised his eyes from it.

'Regan, was that you talking?'

'Twas, sir,' I replied in consternation.

This time the whole class laughed. They couldn't believe that I wasn't deliberately trailing my coat, and, of course, the laugh must have convinced him that I was. I suppose if people do tell you lies all day and every day it soon becomes a sort of perquisite and you resent being deprived of it.

'Oh,' he said, throwing down the book, 'we'll soon put a stop to that.'

This time it was a tougher job, because he really was on his mettle. But so was I. I knew this was the testing point, and that if only I could keep my head I should provide a model for the whole class. When I had got through with it without moving a muscle and returned to my desk with my hands by my side, the invisible presences gave me a great clap, but the visible ones were nearly as annoyed as the Murderer. After school a half-dozen of them followed me down the playground through the smell of stale bread and butter.

'Go on!' they shouted truculently. 'Shaping as usual!'

'I was not shaping.'

'You were shaping! You're always showing off. Trying to pretend he didn't hurt you—a blooming cry-baby like you!'

'I wasn't trying to pretend,' I shouted, even then resisting the temptation to nurse my bruised hands. 'Only decent fellows don't cry over every little pain like kids.'

'Go on!' they bawled after me. 'You ould idiot.' And as I went down the school lane, still trying to keep what the stories called 'a stiff upper lip' and reminding myself that my torture was over until next morning, I heard their mocking voices after me.

'Mad Bill! Yah, Mad Bill!'

I realised that if I was to keep on terms with the invisible presences I should have to watch my step in school.

So I did, all through that year. But then, one day, an awful thing happened. I was coming in from the yard, and in the porch outside our schoolroom I saw a fellow called Gorman taking something from a coat on the rack. Gorman was a fellow I disliked and feared; a handsome, sulky, spoiled and sneering lout. I paid no attention to him because I had escaped for a few moments into my dream-world in which fathers never gave you anything less than fivers and chaps who had been ignored suddenly turned up and

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saved the honour of the school in the last half of the match.

'Who are you looking at?' he asked threateningly.

'I wasn't looking at anyone,' I said with an indignant start.

'I was only getting a pencil out of my coat,' he added, clenching his fists.

'Nobody said you weren't,' said I, thinking this a very queer thing to start a row about.

'You'd better not either,' he snarled. 'You can mind your own business.'

'You mind yours,' I retorted, for the purpose of saving face. 'I never spoke to you at all.'

And that, so far as I was concerned, was the end of it. But after playtime, the Murderer, looking exceptionally serious, stood before the class, balancing a pencil in both hands.

'Everyone who left the classroom this morning, stand out!' he said. Then he lowered his head and looked at us from under his fair brows. 'Mind, now, I said everyone!'

I stood out with the others, including Gorman.

'Did you take anything from a coat on the rack this morning?' asked the Murderer, laying a heavy, hairy paw on Gorman's shoulder and staring into his face.

'Me, sir?' Gorman asked innocently. 'No, sir.'

'Did you see anyone doing it?'

'No, sir.'

'You?' he asked another lad, but even before he reached me at all I realised why Gorman had told the lie and wondered in panic what I should do.

'You?' he asked me, and his big red face was close to mine and his blue eyes only a couple of inches away.

'I didn't take anything, sir,' I said in a low voice.

'Did you see someone else do it?' he asked, raising his brows and indicating quite plainly that he had noticed my evasion. 'Have you a tongue in your head?' he shouted suddenly, and the whole class, electrified, stared at me. 'You?' he added curtly to the next boy as though he had given me up.

'No, sir.'

'Back to your desks the rest of ye!' he ordered. 'Regan, you stay here!'

He waited until everyone was seated again before he went on.

'Turn out your pockets!'

I did, and a half-stifled giggle rose which the Murderer quelled with a thunderous glance. Even for a small boy, I had pockets which were museums in themselves; the purpose of half the things I brought to light I couldn't have explained myself. They were antiques, prehistoric, and unlabelled. Among them was a school story borrowed the previous evening from another chap, a queer fellow who chewed paper as if it were gum. The Murderer reached for it, and, holding it at arm's length, shook it out with an expression of deepening disgust as he saw the nibbled corners and margins.

'Oh,' he said disdainfully, 'so this is how you waste your time, is it? What do you do with these—eat them?'

'Tisn't mine, sir,' I said against the laugh that sprang up. 'I



borrowed it.'

'Is that what you did with the money?' he added quickly, his fat head on one side.

'Money?' I said, getting confused. 'What money?'

'The shilling that was stolen from Flanagan's overcoat this morning,' he added—Flanagan was a little hunch-back whose people coddled him: no one else in the school would have had that much money.

'I never took Flanagan's shilling,' I said, beginning to cry. 'And you have no right to say I did.'

'I have the right to say that you're the most impudent, defiant puppy in the class,' he replied, his voice hoarse with rage, 'and I wouldn't put it past you. What else can anyone expect and you reading this dirty, rotten, filthy rubbish?' And he tore my school story in two halves and tossed them to the farthest corner of the schoolroom. 'Dirty, filthy English rubbish! Now hold out your hand!'

This time the invisible presences deserted me. Hearing themselves described in those contemptuous terms they fled. The Murderer went mad in the way people do whenever they're up against something they don't understand. Even the other fellows were shocked, and heaven knows they had little enough sympathy with me.

'You should put the police on him,' they advised me afterwards in the playground. 'He lifted the cane over his shoulder. He could get gaol for that.'

'But why didn't you say you didn't see anyone?' asked one chap.

'Because I did,' I said, beginning to sob all over again at the memory of my wrongs. 'I saw Gorman.'

'Gorman?' they echoed incredulously. 'Was it Gorman took Flanagan's money? And why didn't you say so?'

'Because it wouldn't be right,' I sobbed.

'Why wouldn't it be right?' one of them asked, gaping.

'Because Gorman should have told the truth himself,' I said. 'And if this was a decent school no one would ever speak to him again for it.'

'But why would Gorman tell the truth if he took the money?' he asked, as you'd speak to a baby. 'Jay, Regan,' he added pityingly, 'you're getting madder and madder. Now look what you're after bringing on yourself!'

Suddenly Gorman himself came lumbering up.

'Regan,' he shouted threateningly, 'did you say I stole Flanagan's money?'

Gorman, though, of course, I didn't realise it, was as much at sea as Moloney and the rest of them. The only way he could explain my silence was by assuming that I was afraid of his threats, and now he felt the time had come to renew them. He couldn't have come at a moment when I cared less for them. Despairingly I lashed out with all my strength at his brutal face. He screamed, and his hand came away from his mouth, all blood. Then he threw off his satchel and made for me, but at the same moment a door

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opened behind us and a lame teacher named Murphy emerged. We all ran like mad and the fight was forgotten.

But it wasn't forgotten in other quarters. Next morning after prayers the Murderer scowled at me.

'Regan,' he asked, 'were you fighting in the yard after school yesterday?'

For a second or so I didn't reply. I couldn't help feeling that the game wasn't worth a candle. But before the spiritual presences fled for ever I made one last effort.

'I was, sir,' I said, and this time there wasn't even a titter. The whole class took it solemnly as the behaviour of a chap who was quite out of his mind.

'Who were you fighting with?'

'I'd rather not say, sir,' I replied, hysteria beginning to well up in me. It was all very well for the invisible presences, but they hadn't to deal with the Murderer.

'Who was he fighting with?' he asked lightly, resting his hands on the desk and studying the ceiling.

'Gorman, sir,' replied three or four voices—as easy as that!

'Did Gorman hit him first?'

'No, sir. He hit Gorman first.'

'Stand out,' he said, taking up the cane again. 'Now,' he added, going up to Gorman, 'you take this and hit him. And make sure you hit him hard,' he added, giving Gorman's arm an encouraging squeeze. 'Regan thinks he's a great fellow. You show him now what we think of him.'

Gorman came towards me with the cane in one hand and a broad grin on his face. The whole class began to roar as if it were a great joke and even the Murderer permitted himself a modest grin at his own cleverness.

'Hold out your hand,' he said to me.

I didn't. I began to feel trapped and a little crazy.

'Hold out your hand, I say!' he shouted, beginning to lose his temper again.

'I will not,' I shouted back at him, losing all control of myself.

'You what?' he cried incredulously, dashing at me round the classroom with his hand raised as though to strike me. 'What's that you said, you dirty little thief?'

'I'm not a thief,' I screamed. 'And if he comes near me I'll kick the shins off him. You have no right to give him that cane, and you have no right to call me a thief either. If you do it again, I'll go down to the police and then we'll soon see who the thief is.'

'You refused to answer my questions,' he shouted, and if I had been in my right mind I should have known that he was suddenly frightened of something.

'No,' I said through my sobs, 'and I won't answer them now either. I'm not a spy.'

'Oh,' he retorted with a sarcastic sniff, 'so that's what you call a spy?'

'Yes, and that's what they all are, all the fellows here—~~dirty~~ spies!—but I'm not going to be a spy for you. You can do your own spying.'

'That's enough now, that's enough!' he said, raising his fat hand almost beseechingly. 'There's no need to lose control of yourself, my dear young fellow, and there's no need whatever to screech like that. 'Tis most unmanly. Go back to your seat now and I'll talk to you another time.'

That day I did no work at all, and no one else did much either. The hysteria had spread to the class. I alternated between fits of exultation at the thought of how I had defied the Murderer to his face and panic at the prospect of how he'd take it out of me after, and at each change of mood I put my head in my hands and sobbed all over again. The Murderer didn't tell me to stop. He didn't even look at me. The poor unfortunate man! When I think of it now I almost feel sorry for him.

After that I was the hero of the school for a whole afternoon. Even Gorman, when he tried to resume the fight was told by two or three of the bigger fellows to hop off; a fellow that took the cane to beat another chap, he had no status at all. But that was not the sort of hero I wanted to be. I wanted something calmer, more codified, less sensational.

Next morning I was in such a state of panic that I didn't know how to face school at all. The silence of the school lane and the yard put me into a fresh panic. I was late again!

'What kept you, Regan?' the Murderer asked quietly.

'I was at Mass, sir,' said I.

'Oh, all right,' he said, though he seemed a bit surprised. What I hadn't realised was the immense advantage of our system over the English one. By this time half a dozen of his pets had brought the Murderer the true story, and if he didn't feel himself a monster, he certainly felt himself a fool, which is worse.

But by that time I didn't care. In my school-sack I had another story. Not a school story this time though. School stories were a wash-out. 'Bang! Bang!'—that was the only way to deal with fellows like the Murderer and Gorman. 'The only good teacher is a dead teacher.'



## ROBERT O'DONOGHUE

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### *EXILE*

She's from the town: brick-bred child  
Of hammer, drill and steel, songs of  
Strife and march, and her eyes sick  
For the morning rise of smoke  
Out of the town's throats—Life and  
Labour belched into the faint face of  
Sky and the kettle-drum like beats of  
Hoofs upon the cobblestones.

Taken from the town, brick-bred child,  
To roots, air and plough, songs of  
Earth and beast, and her mind sick  
Of the morning cough of rooks  
Out of the tree's throats—Flock and  
Feather blown into the white waste of  
Sky and the woman-sigh like kiss of  
Tears upon the riverstones.

She's from the room: corner-caught child  
Of lane, street and yard, hours of  
Rags and gloom, and her mind sick  
For the evening growl of flame  
Out of the town's mouths—Light and  
Laughter rolled into the hollow heart of  
Night and the warm-touch like beat of  
Breaths upon the windowpane.

Locked from the room: cloud-caught child  
In field, moor and hill, hours of  
Suns and moon and her heart sick  
Of the evening flow of stars  
Out of the sky's sides—Stones and  
Trinkets spilt into the long lap of  
Night and the vast-sea like hush of  
Trees upon the windowpane.

*The recent deaths of James Stephens and Bernard Shaw took from Ireland two of her most gifted and famous authors. They are hardly a pair that either reader or critic would bracket together, but, in fact, they had much in common. Both were born in Dublin and the outline of their early years followed a similar course: family poverty, much self-education, uncongenial office-job, library reading-rooms, debating societies, gradual recognition, and, finally, self-imposed exile. Both, too, were brilliant and hypnotic conversationalists and both were philosophers of striking voice and appearance who used wit or humour as one of their main weapons. Shaw, the bearded giant, Stephens, the egg-skulled gnome. But whereas Shaw remained continually in the limelight, Stephens, as time wore on, receded more into the shadow.*

*During the final years of James Stephens' career, 'Irish Writing' was the only Irish periodical to which he contributed new work—a typical short-story which had a bigger and warmer welcome than anything else we have since published. Because of his greatness, because, too, so many of our newer and younger readers may be unacquainted with his work, and because of the friendship and encouragement he showed us, we are reprinting here, in tribute to the memory of James Stephens, that short-story, together with two special articles about the man and his work.*

THE EDITORS.

## JAMES STEPHENS

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### *A RHINOCEROS, SOME LADIES, AND A HORSE*

ONE DAY, in my first job, a lady fell in love with me. It was quite unreasonable, of course, for I wasn't wonderful: I was small and thin, and I weighed much the same as a largish duck-egg. I didn't fall in love with her, or anything like that. I got under the table, and stayed there until she had to go wherever she had to go to.

I had seen an advertisement—"Smart boy wanted," it said. My legs were the smartest things about me, so I went there on the run. I got the job.

At that time there was nothing on God's earth that I could do, except run. I had no brains, and I had no memory. When I was told to do anything I got into such an enthusiasm about it that I couldn't remember anything else about it. I just ran as hard as I could, and then I ran back, proud and panting. And when they asked me for the whatever-it-was that I had run for, I started, right on the instant, and ran some more.

The place I was working at was, amongst other things, a theatrical agency. I used to be sitting in a corner of the office, waiting to be told to run somewhere and back. A lady would come in—a music-hall lady that is—and, in about five minutes, howls of joy would start coming from the inner office. Then, peacefully enough, the lady and my two bosses would come out, and the lady always said, "Splits! I can do splits like no one." theatrical agency. I used to be sitting in a corner of the office,

floor. And one of my bosses would say, "I'm keeping your splits in mind." And the other would add, gallantly,—“No one who ever saw your splits could ever forget 'em.”

One of my bosses was thin, and the other one was fat. My fat boss was composed entirely of stomachs. He had three baby-stomachs under his chin: then he had three more descending in even larger englobings nearly to the ground: but, just before reaching the ground, the final stomach bifurcated into a pair of boots. He was very light on these and could bounce about in the neatest way.

He was the fattest thing I had ever seen, except a rhinoceros that I had met in the Zoo the Sunday before I got the job. That rhino was *very* fat, and it had a smell like twenty-five pigs. I was standing outside its palisade, wondering what it could possibly feel like to be a rhinoceros, when two larger boys passed by. Suddenly they caught hold of me, and pushed me through the bars of the palisade. I was very skinny, and in about two seconds I was right inside, and the rhinoceros was looking at me.

It was very fat, but it wasn't fat like stomachs, it was fat like barrels of cement, and when it moved it creaked a lot, like a woman I used to know who creaked like an old bedstead. The rhinoceros swaggled over to me with a bunch of cabbage sticking out of its mouth. It wasn't angry, or anything like that, it just wanted to see who I was. Rhinos are blindish: they mainly see by smelling, and they smell in snorts. This one started at my left shoe, and snorted right up that side of me to my ear. He smelt that very carefully: then he switched over to my right ear, and snorted right down that side of me to my right shoe: then he fell in love with my shoes and began to lick them. I, naturally, wriggled my feet at that, and the big chap was so astonished that he did the strangest step-dance backwards to his pile of cabbages, and began to eat them.

I squeezed myself out of his cage and walked away. In a couple of minutes I saw the two boys. They were very frightened, and they asked me what I had done to the rhinoceros. I answered, a bit grandly, perhaps, that I had seized it in both hands, ripped it limb from limb, and tossed its carcase to the crows. But when they began shouting to people that I had just murdered a rhinoceros I took to my heels, for I didn't want to be arrested and hanged for a murder that I hadn't committed.

Still, a man can't be as fat as a rhinoceros, but my boss was as fat as a man can be. One day a great lady of the halls came in, and was received on the knee. She was very great. Her name was Maudie Darling, or thereabouts. My bosses called her nothing but "Darling," and she called them the same. When the time came for her to arrive the whole building got palpitations of the heart. After waiting a while my thin boss got angry, and said—"Who does the woman think she is? If she isn't here in two twos I'll go down to the entry, and when she does come I'll boot her out." The fat boss said—"She's only two hours late, she'll be here before the week's out."

Within a few minutes there came great clamours from the



court-yard. Patriotic cheers, such as Parnell himself never got, were thundering. My bosses ran instantly to the inner office. Then the door opened, and the lady appeared.

She was very wide, and deep, and magnificent. She was dressed in camels and zebras and goats: she had two peacocks in her hat and a rabbit muff in her hand, and she strode among these with prancings.

But when she got right into the room and saw herself being looked at by three men and a boy she became adorably shy: one could see that she had never been looked at before.

"O," said she, with a smile that made three and a half hearts beat like one, "O," said she, very modestly, "is Mr. Which-of-'em-is-it really in. Please tell him that Little-Miss-Me would be so glad to see and to be—"

Then the inner door opened, and the large lady was surrounded by my fat boss and my thin boss. She crooned to them—"O, you dear boys, you'll never know how much I've thought of you and longed to see you."

That remark left me stupified. The first day I got to the office I heard that it was the fat boss's birthday, and that he was thirty years of age: and the thin boss didn't look a day younger than the fat one. How the lady could mistake these old men for boys seemed to me the strangest fact that had ever come my way. My own bet was that they'd both die of old age in about a month.

After a while they all came out again. The lady was helpless with laughter: she had to be supported by my two bosses—"O," she cried, "you boys will kill me." And the bosses laughed and laughed, and the fat one said—"Darling, you're a scream," and the thin one said—"Darling, you're a riot."

And then . . . she saw me! I saw her seeing me the very way I had seen the rhinoceros seeing me: I wondered for an instant would she smell me down one leg and up the other. She swept my two bosses right away from her, and she became a kind of queen, very glorious to behold: but sad, startled. She stretched a long, slow arm out and out and out and then she unfolded a long, slow finger, and pointed it at me—"Who is THAT??" she whispered in a strange whisper that could be heard two miles off.

My fat boss was an awful liar—"The cat brought that in," said he.

But the thin boss rebuked him: "No," he said, "it was not the cat. Let me introduce you; darling, this is James. James, this is the darling of the gods."

"And of the pit," said she, sternly.

She looked at me again. Then she sank to her knees and spread out both arms to me—

"Come to my Boozalum, angel," said she in a tender kind of way.

I knew what she meant, and I knew that she didn't know how to pronounce that word. I took a rapid glance at the area indicated. The lady had a Boozalum you could graze a cow on. I didn't wait one second, but slid, in one swift, silent slide, under

the table. Then she came forward and said a whole lot of poems to me under the table, imploring me, among a lot of odd things, to "come forth, and gild the morning with my eyes," but at last she was reduced to whistling at me with two fingers in her mouth, the way you whistle for a cab.

I learned after she had gone that most of the things she said to me were written by a poet fellow named Spokeshave. They were very complimentary, but I couldn't love a woman who mistook my old bosses for boys, and had a boozalum that it would take an Arab chieftain a week to trot across on a camel.

The thin boss pulled me from under the table by my leg, and said that my way was the proper way to treat a rip, but my fat boss said, very gravely—"James, when a lady invites a gentleman to her boozalum a real gentleman hops there as pronto as possible, and I'll have none but real gentlemen in this office."

"Tell me," he went on, "what made that wad of Turkish Delight fall in love with you?"

"She didn't love me at all, sir," I answered.

"No?" he enquired.

"She was making fun of me," I explained.

"There's something in that," said he seriously, and went back to his office.

I had been expecting to be sacked that day. I was sacked the next day, but that was about a horse.

\* \* \* \*

I had been given three letters to post, and told to run or they'd be too late. So I ran to the post office and round it and back, with, naturally, the three letters in my pocket. As I came to our door a nice, solid, red-faced man rode up on a horse. He thrust the reins into my hand—

"Hold the horse for a minute," said he.

"I can't," I replied, "my boss is waiting for me."

"I'll only be a minute," said he angrily, and he walked off.

Well, there was I, saddled, as it were, with a horse. I looked at it, and it looked at me. Then it blew a pint of soap-suds out of its nose and took another look at me, and then the horse fell in love with me as if he had just found his long-lost foal. He started to lean against me and to woo me with small whinneys, and I responded and replied as best I could—

"Don't move a toe," said I to the horse, "I'll be back in a minute."

He understood exactly what I said, and the only move he made was to swing his head and watch me as I darted up the street. I was less than half a minute away anyhow, and never out of his sight.

Up the street there was a man, and sometimes a woman, with a barrow, thick-piled with cabbages and oranges and apples. As I raced round the barrow I pinched an apple off it at full speed, and in ten seconds I was back at the horse. The good nag had watched every move I made, and when I got back his eyes were wide open, his mouth was wide open, and he had his legs all splayed out so that he couldn't possibly slip. I broke the apple in halves and popped one half into his mouth. He ate it in slow

crunches, and then he looked diligently at the other half. I gave him the other half, and, as he ate it, he gurgled with ciderly gargles of pure joy. He then swung his head round from me and pointed his nose up the street, right at the apple-barrow.

I raced up the street again, and was back within the half-minute with another apple. The horse had nigh finished the first half of it when a man who had come up said, thoughtfully—

"He seems to like apples, bedad!"

"He loves them," said I.

And then, exactly at the speed of lightning, the man became angry, and invented bristles all over himself like a porcupine—

"What the hell do you mean," he hissed, and then he bawled, "by stealing my apples?"

I retreated a bit into the horse—

"I didn't steal your apples," I said.

"You didn't!" he roared, and then he hissed, "I saw you," he hissed.

"I didn't steal them," I explained, "I pinched them."

"Tell me that one again," said he.

"If," said I patiently, "if I took the apples for myself that would be stealing."

"So it would," he agreed.

"But as I took them for the horse that's pinching."

"Be dam, but!" said he. "'Tis a real argument," he went on, staring at the sky. "Answer me that one," he demanded of himself, and he in a very stupor of intellection. "I give it up," he roared, "you give me back my apples."

I placed the half apple that was left into his hand, and he looked at it as if it was a dead frog—

"What'll I do with that?" he asked earnestly.

"Give it to the horse," said I.

The horse was now prancing at him, and mincing at him, and making love at him. He pushed the half apple into the horse's mouth, and the horse mumbled it and watched him, and chewed it and watched him, and gurgled it and watched him—

"He does like his bit of apple," said the man.

"He likes you too," said I. "I think he loves you."

"It looks like it," he agreed, for the horse was yearning at him, and its eyes were soulful.

"Let's get him another apple," said I, and, without another word, we both pounded back to his barrow and each of us pinched an apple off it. We got one apple into the horse, and were breaking the second one when a woman said gently—

"Nice, kind, Christian gentlemen, feeding dumb animals—with my apples," she yelled suddenly.

The man with me jumped as if he had been hit by a train—

"Mary," said he humbly.

"Joseph," said she in a completely unloving voice.

But the woman transformed herself into nothing else but woman—

"What about my apples?" said she. "How many have we lost?"

"Three," said Joseph.



"Four," said I, "I pinched three and you pinched one."

"That's true," said he. "That's exact, Mary. I only pinched one of our apples."

"You only," she squealed—

And I, hoping to be useful, broke in—

"Joseph," said I, "is the nice lady your boss?"

He halted for a dreadful second, and made up his mind—

"You bet she's my boss," said he, "and she's better than that, for she's the very wife of my bosum."

She turned to me—

"Child of Grace—" said she—

Now, when I was a child, and did something that a woman didn't like she always expostulated in the same way. If I tramped on her foot, or jabbed her in the stomach—the way women have multitudes of feet and stomachs is always astonishing to a child—the remark such a woman made was always the same. She would grab her toe or her stomach, and say—"Childagrace, what the hell are you doing?" After a while I worked it out that Childagrace was one word, and was my name. When any woman in agony yelled Childagrace I ran right up prepared to be punished, and the woman always said tenderly, "What are you yowling about, Childagrace."

"Childagrace," said Mary earnestly, "how's my family to live if you steal our apples? You take my livelihood away from me! Very good, but will you feed and clothe and educate my children in," she continued proudly, "the condition to which they are accustomed?"

I answered that question cautiously—

"How many kids have you, ma'am?" said I.

"We'll leave that alone for a while," she went on. "You owe me two and six for the apples."

"Mary!" said Joseph, in a pained voice.

"And you," she snarled at him, "owe me three shillings. I'll take it out of you in pints." She turned to me—

"What do you do with all the money you get from the office here?"

"I give it to my landlady."

"Does she stick to the lot of it?"

"Oh, no," I answered, "she always gives me back threepence."

"Well, you come and live with me and I'll give you back fourpence."

"All right," said I.

"By gum," said Joseph, enthusiastically, "that'll be fine. We'll go out every night and we won't steal a thing. We'll just pinch legs of beef, and pig's feet, and barrels of beer—

"Wait now," said Mary. "You stick to your own landlady. I've trouble enough of my own. You needn't pay me the two and six."

"Good for you," said Joseph heartily, and then, to me—

"You just get a wife of your bosum half as kind as the wife of my bosum and you'll be set up for life. Mary," he cried joyfully, "let's go and have a pint on the strength of it."

"You shut up," said she.

"Joseph," I interrupted, "knows how to pronounce that word properly."

"What word?"

"The one he used when he said you were the wife of his what-you-may-call-it."

"I'm not the wife of any man's what-you-may-call-it," said she, indignantly—"Oh, I see what you mean! So he pronounced it well, did he?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She looked at me very sternly—

"How does it come you know about all these kinds of words?"

"Yes," said Joseph, and he was even sterner than she was, "when I was your age I didn't know any bad words."

"You shut up," said she, and continued, "what made you say that to me?"

"A woman came into our office yesterday, and she mispronounced it."

"What did she say now?"

"Oh, she said it all wrong."

"Do you tell me so? We're all friends here: what way did she say it, son?"

"Well, ma'am, she called it boozalum."

"She said it wrong all right," said Joseph, "but 'tis a good, round, fat kind of a word all the same."

"You shut up," said Mary. "Who did she say the word to?"

"She said it to me, ma'am."

"She must have been a rip," said Joseph.

"Was she a rip, now?"

"I don't know, ma'am, I never met a rip."

"You're too young yet," said Joseph, "but you'll meet them later on. I never met a rip myself until I got married—I mean," he added hastily, "that they were all rips except the wife of my what-do-you-call-ems, and that's why I married her."

"I expect you've got a barrel-full of rips in your past," said she bleakly, "you must tell me about some of them tonight." And then, to me, "tell us about the woman," said she.

So I told them all about her, and how she held out her arms to me, and said, "Come to my boozalum, angel."

"What did you do when she shoved out the old arms at you?" said Joseph.

"I got under the table," I answered.

"That's not a bad place at all, but," he continued earnestly, "never get under the bed when there's an old girl chasing you, for that's the worst spot you could pick on. What was the strap's name?"

"Maudie Darling, she called herself."

"You're a blooming lunatic," said Joseph, "she's the loveliest thing in the world, barring," he added hastily, "the wife of my blast-the-bloody-word."

"We saw her last night," said Mary, "at Dan Lowrey's Theatre, and she's just lovely."

"She isn't as nice as you, ma'am," I asserted.

## IRISH WRITING

"Do you tell me that now?" said she.

"You are twice as nice as she is, and twenty times nicer."

"There you are," said Joseph, "the very words I said to you last night."

"You shut up," said Mary scornfully, "you were trying to knock a pint out of me! Listen, son," she went on, "we'll take all that back about your landlady. You come and live with me, and I'll give you back sixpence a week out of your wages."

"All right, ma'am," I crowed in a perfectly monstrous joy.

"Mary," said Joseph, in a reluctant voice—

"You shut up," said she.

"He can't come to live with us," said Joseph. "He's a bloody Prodestan," he added sadly.

"Why—" she began—

"He'd keep me and the childer up all night, pinching apples for horses and asses, and reading the bible, and up to every kind of devilment."

Mary made up her mind quickly—

"You stick to your own landlady," said she, "tell her that I said she was to give you sixpence." She whirled about. "There won't be a thing left on that barrow," said she to Joseph.

"Dam the scrap," said Joseph violently.

"Listen," said Mary to me very earnestly, "am I nicer than Maudie Darling?"

"You are, ma'am," said I.

Mary went down on the road on her knees: she stretched out both arms to me, and said—

"Come to my boozalum, angel."

I looked at her, and I looked at Joseph, and I looked at the horse. Then I turned from them all and ran into the building and into the office. My fat boss met me—

"Here's your five bob," said he. "Get to hell out of here," said he.

And I ran out.

I went to the horse, and leaned my head against the thick end of his neck, and the horse leaned as much of himself against me as he could manage. Then the man who owned the horse came up and climbed into his saddle. He fumbled in his pocket—

"You were too long," said I. "I've been sacked for minding your horse."

"That's too bad," said he: "that's too damn bad," and he tossed me a penny.

I caught it, and lobbed it back into his lap, and I strode down the street the most outraged human being then living in the world.



## DAVID MARCUS

### ONE AFTERNOON WITH JAMES STEPHENS

**W**HEN, in April of 1946, the first plans for the magazine 'Irish Writing' were being laid by Terence Smith and myself, we decided that a contribution from James Stephens would be a perfect beginning for No. 1. We were, of course, firm admirers of his work, and had also been captivated by a few new tales which he had, but a short time previously, broadcast from the B.B.C. In the first flush of our enthusiasm and innocence we did not realise what difficulties might lie in the path of our desire. Stephens had been writing very little for years, he had been gravely ill for some periods, and, as far as we knew, had not published anything in an Irish magazine for perhaps a decade or more.

However, we wrote him, setting out our aims and asking for his help. A few mornings later our postman brought us a large, registered envelope on which our address was written in a most beautiful and decorative script. In it was a brand new story from James Stephens. Its title, a typical Stephens one, was 'A Rhinoceros, Some Ladies, And A Horse.' (It turned out to be one of the most widely-acclaimed contributions ever to appear in our pages and was quickly reprinted by the 'American Mercury.') Some time later, when returning proofs, Stephens wrote:

'... I think the story isn't half bad. I wish 'Irish Writing' every success in the world; and am very impatient to see it anyhow.'

Our first issue was due to appear at the end of November, 1946. Early that month I was in London arranging distribution plans. I hoped to get in touch with Stephens and meet him, and I happened to mention this to Patric Dickinson who, as poetry-editor of the B.B.C., had produced Stephens' poetry-broadcasts. But Dickinson dissuaded me.

'Stephens!' he said, throwing up his hands, 'no chance. He's not too well, you know, and besides, he's an impossible man to catch.'

'But I have his address,' I replied.

'That's useless,' answered Dickinson. 'That's only his London home. He spends most of his time in the country and you'll seldom find him at that London address you have.'

That seemed to be that, and as I had no urgent reason for seeing Stephens I decided not to bother him.

However, when my last day in London arrived, I found myself, in the morning, with all my calls made and no plans for the next twenty-four hours. I thought again of James Stephens. Why not? No harm in ringing him up and just saying 'hello.' I took up the 'phone-book and turned to the 'Stephens's.' There was a wide variety but not the James Stephens I was seeking. I felt certain his London house would be on the 'phone and as

his number was not listed this could only mean that he did indeed wish to be undisturbed as far as possible. But James Stephens was to me a magic name and a magic voice, and there was a long empty day ahead, so I decided to go a step further. I rang the exchange, gave his name and address, and asked to be put through. To my surprise and delight, the call was answered.

The speaker was a lady, and when I asked if I might have a word with Mr. James Stephens, she told me that he was in but not available unless the call were urgent. I admitted that my call was not urgent but explained my mission and asked that he be told, hoping all the while that he would remember an unknown editor of a new, and as yet unpublished magazine. In a moment I heard the quiet, sing-song voice of James Stephens greeting me.

I explained that it was the last day of my first visit to London, and that I was hoping to present him personally with 'Irish Writing' No. 1, (a number of pre-publication copies had just been sent on to me) if he were free to see me.

'Well, you know,' said he, liltingly, 'I'm a peculiarly busy person.'

I agreed that no doubt he must be just that, but if he were at all available that day I would be grateful. So we arranged to meet at one o'clock for lunch outside a café in Piccadilly.

Just before hanging up I realised that I had not the vaguest idea of what he looked like. 'How will we know each other?' I asked.

'That's simple,' he answered, and as if he were a child confiding a proud, delightful secret, he said, 'I'll be the smallest man you've ever seen.'

So at one o'clock I stood in Piccadilly looking for the smallest man in the world. From Oxford Street, appearing out of the maze of dense traffic, I saw him. A soft hat on top, an overcoat draped from chin almost to the ground, and, in between, the face of not just any leprechaun but surely of the King of the Leprechauns himself—and the whole structure seemed to reach barely to my top trouser-button.

He shook my hand with great formality and then ushered me into the café. As soon as we were seated at a table, I drew out a copy of 'Irish Writing' and laid it before him. The cover of the first issue depicted a large, soft-green map of Ireland surrounded with a sky-blue sea, and two slender white lines, like breaking waves, ringing the whole coastline. Stretching from the north-east to south-west corners of the map were the names of our first fifteen contributors, headed by Liam O'Flaherty and James Stephens. Stephens looked at it, plonked his hand on the cover, and, with great relish, said, 'Ah, that's Ireland.' Then he put a finger on O'Flaherty's name, saying, 'I'm glad to see him there. You have the right man on top.'

From then on the whole lunch-time was taken up by questions from Stephens about every writer in Ireland, about the state of the country's culture, and about the prospects for 'Irish

'Writing.' He had been, at that time, already about twenty years an exile and he regretted greatly that he had grown out of touch not only with the Irish people and Irish affairs but even with contemporary Irish literature.

'I do very little reading these days,' he said. And then, looking rather wistfully past me, he added, 'Some day soon I'm going to get down to real, serious reading: I'm going to read through all my own works again.'

I smiled, thinking he was joking, but he continued, 'That's quite true. What use is it to me, at my time, to read another man's work, doing nothing but judging every line and criticising every judgment? At least with my own work I know why I said whatever I said and that when I said it I was satisfied. And to write more myself requires energy I no longer have.'

'But what about poetry?' I asked. 'Poetry often requires a great deal of energy to write; but sometimes it comes of its own accord and once started it drives you on and provides its own power, or at least makes you find the energy to finish.'

Stephens shook his head—'I've said all I want to say in poetry,' was the answer.

He turned again to 'Irish Writing,' picking out the name of Myles na gCopaleen. 'Who is this beautiful person?' he asked. I told him about Myles's column in the 'Irish Times,' about his brilliant Gaelic autobiography and about his ability to pun in Irish. Stephens was lit up with enthusiasm. 'What a pity,' he said, 'that I've left my knowledge of Irish dry away completely. I shouldn't have. Perhaps you could help me. Are there any books you could send me to brush up the old tongue?' Within no time Stephens had me promising to send him a 'Teach Yourself Irish' or some such aid.

By now it was near two-thirty and Stephens suggested that we move to another place for afternoon tea. This suited me as I had wanted to get him onto the subject of poetry again. So we entered a Lyons café and took a table in the corner. We were served by a waitress (at lunch we were ministered to by a waiter in whom Stephens took no interest) and Stephens, in next to no time, had learnt most of her life-history. As part of it included the information that she had been born in Ireland, the two of them were quickly firm friends and he, in some subtle way, made us feel part of a secret and rather aristocratic brotherhood thrown into an alien and hostile crowd. On the strength of it he obtained a little extra sugar—it was then severely rationed—and had no need, as had been necessary at lunch, to draw out of his pocket the little bag of sugar which, he explained, he always carried with him these days.

So as to get him back to poetry I asked what he thought of the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas. I knew that they were poles apart as poets—but they had some things in common: both were inspired and highly-individualistic readers of poetry, both had frequently broadcast over the B.B.C., and both wrote poetry that was meant to be spoken. Stephens repeated that he read little or no contemporary work and though he knew something



of Thomas, he could not say much about him. He invited my opinion and when I mentioned my admiration of one of Thomas's latest poems, 'Fern Hill,' he made me speak it for him. Perhaps it was its length, or else my mode of reciting it, but I thought he tired before the end and I felt sure when, after it, he said, 'You know, Milton is supposed to have written the longest poem in the English language. Well, I've written the shortest.'

Thereupon he proceeded to recite the poem in question. Unfortunately I cannot recall which one it was but, to my mind, the most interesting point of this impromptu recital was something else. A Lyons café is, at almost any time, a very busy place. Tables are seldom empty for long, and, in common with most modern cafés, are placed very close to each other. Though we were in a corner there were still many tables, all occupied, within a few feet of us—and Stephens had taken the corner-chair, thus having a view of the whole floor. Up to now our conversation had been maintained at a normal tone of voice, but once Stephens started to speak his poem, everything changed. It was as if time and place had disappeared and he were at that moment before a microphone or perhaps once again on a stage, holding a vast audience spellbound, as he had often done, with his magic poetry-recitals. I was completely gripped as I watched the rubbery face before me reflect every intonation and mood; the eyes would open wide apart and then slumberingly peer through almost closed lashes and then be swallowed entirely by the bosomy lids that enveloped them. The hands would draw the poem all about me in the air and the massive-seeming head would sway and float like a barrage-balloon in a breezy day. It was sheer magic.

Only when he had finished did I realise that everyone near us must have heard him, and I began to feel embarrassed. But without delay Stephens said, 'And what's more, I've written the only poem in the English language that hasn't a verb,' and he proceeded to recite 'The Main-Deep.' I immediately looked about me and found that everybody in that part of the room was transported. Knives were laid quietly aside and cups were carefully and soundlessly deposited in their saucers while the people sat—like statues—hypnotised by the almost unbelievable beauty and delight of James Stephens' voice speaking poetry. I relaxed and again allowed the spell to envelope me. Stephens continued—'the slowest poem in the English language,' 'the quickest poem in the English language.' Words and rhythms entranced him and he made them entrancing. When he finished, he insisted that I recite some of my own poems for him. Almost stumbling over the words I did so, and when he extracted lines here and there and put them through the wonderful instrument of music and sensitivity that his voice was, my own poetry seemed to have more in it than I had ever seen before and could ever see again.

Then he said that he would have to leave for he had an appointment at the B.B.C. to broadcast on their overseas service to 'the tribes of interior Africa about Donne and Shakespeare.' As we came out of the café he spotted a street-photographer just

packing up for the day. Stephens approached him and made him take one last 'snap' of the two of us together. He gave me the card which was necessary to obtain the picture when developed, but in the bustle of returning home, somehow, to my lasting regret, it lost itself.

Then he took my hand and thanked me for getting in touch with him. 'God bless you,' he said, 'and when you get home, give my love to everybody in Ireland.'

'Everybody?' I replied. 'That's rather a tall order.'

'Maybe 'tis and maybe 'tish't,' said James Stephens, 'but that's the way I want it. For you're young and I'm old and, as between us, it's likely you'll have much more time to do it than I will.'

I promised I would try. So here then, as ending, is that blessing from James Stephens to the people of Ireland.

JAMES STEPHENS: *HIS VERSION OF PASTORAL*

*The last great age, foretold by sacred rhymes,  
Renews its finished course: Saturnian times  
Roll round again; and mighty years, begun  
From their first orb, in radiant circles run.  
The base degenerate iron offspring ends;  
A golden progeny from heaven descends.*

VIRGIL, Eclogue IV, Dryden translation.

WHEN I was small, at least once a month we would take a Sunday afternoon drive over to my uncle's, near Banagher. We were almost certain to pass a tinker encampment by the roadside; I suppose the quiet of the bog roads, the nearness of Banagher and its horse fair, the two bridges over the Shannon into Connacht in the neighbourhood, all had something to do with it. Anyway, my uncle and aunt always maintained that you could see more tinkers in that part of Offaly than anywhere else in Ireland; and my three little girl-cousins were tinker-mad. Their favourite game was either playing at tinkers or dressing up as tinkers. I thought this very natural at the time, though I didn't altogether share their enthusiasm, for I was rather afraid of tinkers, as indeed they were, too. However, it must have looked a little funny to some of my uncle's parishioners—he was the Protestant rector.

When I first saw Watteau's paintings of *fêtes champêtres*, with their French nobility prettily dressed up as shepherds and shepherdesses, everybody looked too clean for me to associate them with my little cousins, for whom the chief attraction of dressing up as tinkers seemed to be that they could be as dirty and untidy as possible. I did not realise that even the rather formal garb of a Watteau shepherdess freed a duchess from certain restraints fully as irksome to her as cleanliness and tidiness sometimes were to my cousins. Later on I learned that there was a whole literary genre in which poets, metaphorically speaking, dressed up as shepherds and shepherdesses for their own purposes—to speak with less restraint about their love, to weep more uncontrollably for the loss of a friend, to pay more outrageously servile compliments to their patrons. Examples of all these come to hand in Virgil's Eclogues—the wooing of Alexis in Eclogue II, the lament for Daphnis in Eclogue V, the outrageous compliment to Augustus Caesar in Eclogue I, where Tityrus says:

These blessings, friend, a diety bestowed;  
For never can I deem him less than God.

It is not, however, my business here to give a complete survey of pastoral poetry, nor to examine all the disguises under which the pastoral mode has persisted down to our own day; the latter task has been brilliantly carried out by William Empson in *Some Ver-*



sions of *Pastoral* (London, 1935), where he analyses proletarian literature and *Alice in Wonderland* from this point of view. I only want to suggest here that much twentieth-century Irish writing, especially that of James Stephens, is in the pastoral convention; sometimes it takes the form of genuine pastoral, when the author dresses up as a small farmer or a fisherman; at other times it is mock-pastoral (a term coined by Empson), where the intention is mainly satirical or at least anti-social—in other words, playing at tinkers.

As I have indicated above, authors who use the pastoral convention are seeking to evade or criticize certain restraints imposed by society in their time: what the particular restraints are will vary from age to age, but ultimately all pastoral poetry implies a hankering for what one might call the ultimate in pastoral—namely, the return of the Golden Age, where there is freedom from all restraint. The characteristics of this age are the same in every literature; you will find them in *Genesis* as in *Eclogue IV* of Virgil (the so-called Messianic *Eclogue*): the curse on Adam is revoked or has not yet been uttered; the soil brings forth without being tilled; Death and Sin do not exist; War, Crime, Disease, Pain and Poverty inevitably remain with them in oblivion. This, the supreme vision of pastoral poetry, never stays out of sight for long in either the verse or prose of James Stephens.

The three prose books with which Stephens conquered a world-wide reputation—*The Charwoman's Daughter*, 1912, (called *Mary*, *Mary in America*), *The Crock of Gold*, 1912, and *The Demi-Gods*, 1914—all fit into the pastoral category without any Procrustean treatment from me. Take the opening paragraph of *The Charwoman's Daughter*:

Mary Makebelieve lived with her mother in a small room at the very top of a big, dingy house in a Dublin back street. As long as she could remember she had lived in that top back room. She knew every crack in the ceiling, and they were numerous and of strange shapes.

These few sentences should be enough to inform the intelligent reader that he is about to read an idyll, not a social indictment, nor even a documentary. If he misses the implications of Mary's surname, he surely cannot overlook those of "strange shapes." The word "strange" notifies him that the description which follows will be an excursion into, not the sordid, but the picturesque. And so it proves; the occasional sordid details are seen to be nothing more sinister or tendentious than local colour. A great deal of the descriptive matter in the book deals, actually, with the fine dresses the Makebelieves would like to buy and the bourgeois appointments of the houses where the mother works as a charwoman.

Parenthetically, this is as good a place as any to remark on the high proportion of descriptive writing, as opposed to narrative or dialogue, that occurs in all Stephens's prose work. In his introduction to Darrell Figgis's *The Return of the Hero* (New York, 1930) Stephens laments the "purple passage", saying that

it "ceased to be when the young men from the public schools discovered that they were not able to write it." He also propounds such heresies as that "the passages called 'descriptive' are the author's own, and exhibit his personal idiom", that they are "analogous to the cadenza as used by most fine musicians", and that "they do not aid or abet his narrative: they only prove his writership"; all of which are perfectly accurate descriptions of his own practice, but anathema to writers of my generation. Descriptive passages in prose, imagery in poetry, must nowadays be functional, like the decorative motifs in modern architecture. Any piece of ornament that doesn't also help to hold the building up must go, according to the functionalist. Personally, after reading umpteen Stephens cadenzas on the theme "Dawn", I am inclined to say Amen to the functionalist creed. Yet take away the descriptive passages from Stephens, and what has he left?

Not plot, certainly. *The Charwoman's Daughter* is a frail, consumptive thing indeed. Mary falls in love with a member of the Dublin Metropolitan Police from afar; they meet in the Phoenix Park one day; they start keeping company and he treats her with the greatest respect until he finds out that she is the daughter of a charwoman; then he is insolent and tries to kiss her, if not rape her, but she escapes; he comes and asks her mother for her hand; Mary refuses him; the poor youth who truly loves her fights with the cop; finally Mary's mother becomes rich through a legacy, the young folk marry, and everybody lives happily ever after. The reader will perhaps pardon me if I make no further attempts to summarise Stephens's plots. In discussing the genesis of *The Charwoman's Daughter* in *On Prose and Verse* (New York, 1928), Stephens wrote as follows:

I poised a pen, and tried to be whatever my mind should at that instant chance on, and this book is the result.

He was, to my mind, playing at being a charwoman, "dressing up," and the book's faults and virtues both spring from that source.

For the book has virtues, easy to see, but hard to define. What do you make of a passage like this, for instance? It portrays Mary's judgment of her young man:

He had instantly played with the children on their being presented to him; this was the sign of a good nature. Before he was acquainted with her ten minutes he had made four jokes: this was the sign of a pleasant nature; and he sang loudly and unceasingly when he awoke in the morning, which was the unfailing index to a happy nature.

Here we have a calculated naïveté that nobody but Stephens can manage; whether it accurately represents the mental process of a simple girl of the people seems to me beside the point: almost certainly it doesn't; but it expresses the unique sensibility of one James Stephens to a T. He may have honestly "tried to be whatever his mind should at that instant chance on," but he could never be anything but himself, any more than Sterne could.

Passing over *The Crock of Gold* for the moment, let us take a quick look at *The Demi-Gods*, where we find not only Stephens, but a trio of angels, playing at tinkers. The descent of gods and demi-gods to earth is of course a well-worn pastoral theme; very often the cult of old gods survives only in the country, or else the country people are thought of as being the only ones sincere enough in their devotions and emotions to deserve the visits of the gods. Think of Philemon and Baucis, the country couple who were hosts to the gods Jupiter and Mercury, or of the Galilean fisherman who was the first to recognise the divinity of Christ.

Three angels, then, Finaun, Caeltia and Art, descend on Ireland to learn something of the ways of men; the first people they meet are a tinker named Patsy MacCann, his daughter Mary, and their ass. Art, the youngest, reveals an affinity for Mary, Caeltia for Patsy, and Finaun for the donkey; they turn out later to be their guardian angels. The Irish reader does not need to be reminded that the angels bear names familiar in Irish legend as those of inhabitants of the Country of the Young rather than of any Christian heaven.

The thieving Patsy fits neatly into an Empsonian category, so let me quote chapter and verse from *Some Versions of Pastoral* p. 17:

So far as the person described is outside society because too poor for its benefits he is independent, as the artist claims to be, and can be a critic of society; so far as he is forced by this into crime he is the judge of the society that judges him.

Stephens takes a more genuinely pastoral view of his Autolycus, probably because he does not really care enough about organized society to want to satirise it as socially-minded John Gay did in his "Newgate pastoral", *The Beggar's Opera*. Stephens writes of Patsy:

If the denominations of virtue or vice must be affixed to his innocent existence, then these terms would have to be re-defined, for they had no meaning in his case; he stood outside these as he did outside of the social structure.

Here the key-word is of course "innocent", for the Golden Age is the Age of Innocence, where Sin has been abolished or not yet come into existence. It is not altogether surprising to find that "the angels were strangely like Patsy MacCann. Their ideas of right and wrong almost entirely coincided with his. They had no property and so they had no prejudices . . ." After all, Tír na nÓg is little more than an indefinite continuation of the Golden Age.

Mary is another wondering, budding virgin like Mary Make-believe, with overtones of Barrie's ultra-maternal Wendy. "She had constituted herself in some strange way the mother of the four men." Stephens was born a Protestant and many people who should know have described him as in some sense a pagan, but the cult of the virgin who is also a mother crops up in the oddest places. Normal maternity is felt to have a taint of Sin even in the Never-never Land, where Sin is supposed to have been abolished. After various adventures the two older angels return to Heaven, but Art



decides to remain on Earth with Mary.

In *The Demi-Gods* Stephens reveals a mastery of a certain type of dialogue that he had only occasionally achieved in *The Crock of Gold*. In the Golden Age men and animals were able to talk to each other; this was perhaps unfortunate, for it enabled the serpent to mislead Eve. However, here is a portion of Art's chat with a spider:

"Are the times bad with you now, or are they middling?"

"Not so bad, glory be to God! The flies do wander in through the holes, and when they come from the light outside to the darkness in here, sir, we catch them on the wall, and we crunch their bones."

"Do they like that?"

"They do not, sir, but we do. The lad with the stout hairy legs, down there beside your elbow, caught a blue-bottle yesterday; there was eating on that fellow, I tell you, and he's not all eaten yet, but that spider is always lucky, barring the day he caught the wasp."

It seems to me significant that the spider "sirs" Art like a peasant talking to a landlord; we aren't as far from the Lever-Lover type of humour that makes fun of "the natives" as we might have thought. But no one else except the Flann O'Brien of *At Swim-Two-Birds* has mastered the knack of this kind of dialogue. It flows as freely between the human characters in *The Demi-Gods* as it does between them and the non-human. For example:

"What sort of a bad woman is she?"

"She's the sort that commits adultery with every kind of man," said he harshly.

Caeltia turned over that accusation a moment.

"Did she ever commit adultery with yourself?" said he.

"She did not," said Patsy, "and that's why I don't like her."

We may now turn back to *The Crock of Gold*, which begins as an Irish *Peter Pan*, but ends as something a little more profound—an allegory of the rescue of the Human Intellect, in bondage to Civilisation (the absurd and brutal Policeman), by the forces of the Divine Imagination.

The Peter Pan theme is developed in the first part of the book. Pan, the ancient god (not the emasculated Peter of Barrie), comes to Ireland saying "in this country no people have done any reverence to me" and entices a "Shepherd Girl" named Caitilin Ni Murrachu. He gives her "only unrest and fever and a longing which could not be satisfied." But the Philosopher summons Angue Og to the rescue, and he, in the name of the Divine Imagination, wins Caitilin from the interloping foreign god, but keeps her for himself. Caitilin, as one might expect, is another Mary Makebelieve.

Meanwhile, the Philosopher, through his contact with Pan and Angus Og, has escaped, at least temporarily, from his world

of abstractions, and returns home to make his peace with his wife (who of course represents Intuition). Unhappily, he has previously earned the enmity of the Leprecauns of Gort na Gloca Mora ("How are things in Glocca Morra?") and they have laid information with the police which results in his arrest on a charge of murder. After they regain their lost crock of gold through the help of the Philosopher's children, the remorseful Leprecauns bring off a rescue. However, the Philosopher insists on giving himself up again, rather than hide out indefinitely with the Leprecauns. His wife (Intuition) seeks the help of Angus Og (Divine Imagination), Angus summons the Host of the Shee, and they make a raid upon the city:

And they took the Philosopher from his prison, even the Intellect of Man they took from the hands of the doctors and lawyers, from the sly priests, from the professors whose mouths are gorged with sawdust, and the merchants who sell blades of grass—the awful people of the Fomor . . . and then they returned again, dancing and singing to the country of the gods . . .

When we come to the consideration of Stephens's poetry, we shall find ourselves wishing that he had more thoroughly learned the lessons of his own allegory. All too frequently the Human Intellect—and not too powerful a one at that—is offered to us in place of the Divine Imagination. Stephens unquestionably had ambitions of being a philosopher, but he is usually no better than a philosophizer. In the prose works, too, he constantly intrudes in his own person with bromides like the following (which appears on an early page of *The Crock of Gold* itself):

Curiosity will conquer fear even more than bravery will; indeed, it has led many people into dangers which mere physical courage would shudder away from, for hunger and love and curiosity are the great impelling forces of life.

Lack of space prevents me from discussing Stephens's other prose works; *Here are Ladies*, 1913, and *Etched In Moonlight*, 1928, are collections of short sketches mainly dealing with urban and suburban life, which, as one might expect from Stephens, are not painted in very glowing colours. *Irish Fairy Tales*, 1920, from the Fionn cycle, and *Deirdre*, 1923, and *In the Land of Youth*, 1924, from the Táin Bó Cúalgne, I had better leave to those who are familiar with the Irish originals. There is just one thing I would like to say about Stephens's characterization of *Deirdre*; she is, to my mind, yet another version of Mary Makebelieve, and the Deirdre of legend was surely not that. The number of female types—or archetypes—that men's imaginations have created is indeed limited, but the Deirdre-type is without doubt the *femme fatale* who appeals to men's masochistic impulses, the queenly Deirdre of Synge rather than the flapper of Stephens:

Deirdre entered like a whirlwind of legs and laughter, and, seeing a huge man staring at her, she halted as if she had been stopped by a wall, whirled about and would have vanished again but that Lavarcham's voice restrained her.

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Stephens, foreseeably, cannot rise to tragedy, and hurries through Deirdre's unhappy end as quickly as he decently may.

Stephens's poetic debut in 1909 with *Insurrections* was auspicious; the book's emphasis on firmness of outline and roughness of texture blew aside a great deal of pseudo-Celtic mistiness. Here is a fair sample of what I mean by roughness of texture:

The driver rubbed at his nettly chin  
With a huge, loose forefinger, crooked and black,  
And his wobbly, violet lips sucked in,  
And puffed out again and hung down slack:

Synge's posthumous *Poems and Translations*, 1909 ("before verse can be human again it must learn to be brutal") aimed in the same direction, as Yeats's poetry of the same period was beginning to do. I should say the biggest influence on Stephens at this time was Browning, but when he took up Irish and produced the volume of translations and adaptations called *Reincarnations*, 1918, he must have realised that his early poems were a good deal more Gaelic than the "Celticism" he was reacting against. His two favourite Gaelic poets were Raftery and O'Bruadair, in whom he found the tinkerness he loved.

In the books between *Insurrections* and *Reincarnations*, however, there is much that is merely pretty and very obviously derivative from some of the feeblest English models—particularly the weaker poets of the Nineties. John Davidson had produced two volumes of *Fleet Street Eclogues* in 1893 and 1896; as part of *The Adventures of Seumas Beg*, 1915, Stephens printed a group of poems entitled "The Rocky Road to Dublin" which endeavoured to pastoralise the city—a self-contradictory task. He wisely omitted most of them from his *Collected Poems*, 1926. One of the omitted poems bears the title "Grafton Street". The second and last stanza goes like this:

And at five o'clock they take,  
In a Café, tea and cake,  
Then they call a carriage, and  
Drive back into fairyland,

Admittedly, no one in our time has caught the note of Blake better than Stephens has, but writing like the above stems, not from *Songs of Innocence*, but from R. L. Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*—very fine rhymes in their way, yet containing no hint of the metaphysical overtones of Blake.

Apropos of *The Adventures of Seumas Beg* we should note Stephens's share in the cult of the child, which Empson has shown to be a clearly-marked version of pastoral. In childhood we are nearer to the Golden Age, as Vaughan's "Retreat" and Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" remind us. Empson remarks that "the man playing at childcult arrives at Sex War" in *Alice in Wonderland*. The two themes go hand-in-hand in Barrie, too, as they do in Stephens, though it is not easy to explain why. Perhaps as we recede into childhood we are compelled to take sides between Father and Mother, just as we did when we were really children. In *The Crock of Gold* the Philos-



opher's wife tells her children "that between men and women there exists a state of unrelenting warfare," an idea that is exploited in many of the stories from *Here Are Ladies*, as in many poems by Stephens.

Nowhere, perhaps, do Stephens's pastoral tendencies come out more clearly than in the selection and arrangement of the 1926 *Collected Poems*; after a preface containing a spirited defence of lyric poetry, especially at the beginning of a new era such as he believes the present to be, he sets out all the poetry he wished to be preserved under six subject-headings. The first, "In Green Ways", covers his nature poetry, all those poems where he identifies himself with small or shy creatures like the rabbit of "The Snare" or the satyr who gives his name to one poem. Perhaps "Little Things" represents this section best:

All trapped and frightened little things,  
The mouse, the coney, hear our prayer!

As we forgive those done to us,  
—The lamb, the linnet, and the hare—

Forgive us all our trespasses,  
Little creatures, everywhere!

Book Two, titled "A Honeycombe" (*sic*), deals with love and the war between the sexes. Readers may remember the poem entitled "Nora Criona", about the too-understanding wife, which ends:

Yesterday he gripped her tight  
And cut her throat—and serve her right!

Book Three, "In Two Lights", contains a series of twilight pictures from city and country; no reference to the Gaelic Twilight is intended; it seems rather that this time of day held a very personal symbolism for Stephens, a kind of moral significance. One such poem, "The Holy Time", which appears on the surface purely descriptive, ends with the assertion, "*there is no sin.*" Conventional morality seems here a creature of the broad daylight, whereas in the half-light innocence is possible. In more traditional symbolism, sunlight and sinlessness are usually equated.

Book Four, "Heels and Head", contains the poems of vision, the core of Stephens. Very often the vision is conveyed through a character, some mad beggarman, Tomas An Buile or Mad Patsy, who is outside normal humanity and allows none of its preconceptions to come between him and his vision. At other times the poet himself is the visionary, reminding us of Blake, as in "Psychometrist":

I listened to a man and he  
Had no word to say to me:  
Then unto a stone I bowed,  
And it spoke to me aloud.

"The Force that bindeth me so long,  
Once moved in the linnet's song,  
Now upon the ground I lie,  
While the centuries go by"

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Book Five, "Less Than Daintily", lives up to its name, and contains many of the abusive poems from *Reincarnations*, such as "A Glass of Beer":

The lanky hank of a she in the inn over there  
Nearly killed me for asking the loan of a glass of beer:  
which ends, you may remember, with the notable curse:

May she marry a ghost and bear him a kitten, and may  
The High King of Glory permit her to get the mange.

The title of Book Six, "The Golden Bird", refers to a poem of the same name, where we find that the golden bird is named Joy. It might better have been called Ecstasy. Even the thought of death can lift the poet out of himself, but it is often hard for us to follow him in his flight. Many poems in this section seem to me only half-achieved.

Of the two last volumes of poetry, *Strict Joy*, 1931, and *Kings and the Moon*, 1938, the former seems to me to show Stephens at his philosophising worst, while the latter reveals him at his lyrical best. Yet the one book has as much right to the title of philosophical poetry as the other. In *Strict Joy* there is writing as muddy and archaizing as this:

He saith—Do not believe it! Do not hold  
As seen one scene it showeth, nor as done  
One deed it seemeth forth!

Most of *Kings and the Moon*, however, sings as gaily as this:

When I was young  
I had no sense  
—Now I'm older  
None have I:  
I had no fiddle,  
Had no pence  
—Now I'm older  
None have I.

or this:

What is love?  
Tell me,  
I pray!  
It is eating,  
Greedily,  
Three times a day:

both of which seem to me both better poetry and profounder philosophy than anything in the earlier volume. Stephens seems to think so too, for he writes:

I have wasted  
Precious time!  
—Seeking  
What is nowhere found—  
Seeking reason,  
And to climb  
By that to another ground:

We cannot, ultimately, say that in choosing the pastoral and lyric modes Stephens did not know what he was doing; in them the poet, under whatever disguises, expresses nothing but himself, and that is precisely what Stephens was best fitted to do. In epic and dramatic poetry the poet is striving to express something other than himself, namely the accepted beliefs of his time, its civic attitudes. The pastoral poet flees the city for the country because everything civic is abhorrent to him; he wants no part of the *civitas* and its civilisation; he is essentially an anarchist. He is the rebellious son, who rejects the city built by his father and runs to the bosom of Mother Nature. Since he fails to make the normal and necessary identification with the father which carries most of us out of adolescence into manhood, he will never quite grow up; like Peter Pan, he doesn't want to. Many artists, though not most—nor, I believe, the most worth-while—belong to this personality type. They are none the happier for doing so, since their natural habitat, the Golden Age, can never return. If they live to be old, and if they encounter the normal share of sickness and suffering, they can become the unhappiest and bitterest of men. I hope that James Stephens was happy in his last years, but I am not sure.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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LEINSTER, MUNSTER AND CONNAUGHT, BY FRANK O'CONNOR. (*Robert Hale*, 15/-).  
WITH RUCKSACK ROUND IRELAND, BY JOHN WOOD. (*Paul Elek*, 9/6).

### A HEADY MIXTURE

Frank O'Connor's contribution to the County Book series is a heady mixture of architecture, anecdote, history, autobiography and most distinctive photography. Only at rare moments has it the impersonality of a guide-book for which, with a writer of O'Connor's calibre, one is supremely thankful.

Apart from the many pages given to architecture, of which I am completely ignorant, I found not a dull line in the book. I had settled down to enjoy the first chapter, devoted mainly to Swift, when I became conscious of rattling windows and roaring flames and an agitated shout: "My God! the house is on fire!" I continued to read for a few moments, but seeing my landlady's distress at my impersonation of Nero, I volunteered to telephone the Fire Brigade.

I regret that blazing chimney. When I returned to O'Connor I failed to recapture my first glow of enjoyment. I began to read critically which I am convinced is the wrong way to read him. O'Connor is too forthright to make any concessions to his reader's illusions or prejudices, especially if the reader be a Corkman. His quiet malicious wit is more devastating than his fulminations. If Frank O'Connor were a rugby full-back he would hand-trip rather than crash-tackle an opponent. Take, for instance, his description of the Abbey Theatre: "once the city morgue and now entirely restored to its original purpose."

His intimate recollections of Yeats and Lady Gregory give the book a special value. He was embarrassed when his early work won the approval of Yeats "who had fathered more bad art and literature than any great writer of his time." From the "holy terror" Lady Gregory he seems to have got less encouragement. He found her as difficult to amuse as Queen Victoria: the old lady would surely have said "No" to some of the stories in the present book.

It is no overstatement to say that Frank O'Connor as a tourist guide is unorthodox. He has a tolerant smile for those who waste their holidays in Achill or the Aran Islands. Perhaps it is his unhappy, hybrid "insulaphobia", or that Croaghnaun cliffs cannot be reached by bicycle—O'Connor's Arab steed. Glengariff is lucky to escape mention, but Killarney, which he has made the capital of Kerry, is "a depressing hole, infested by hotel-keepers, touts, jarveys and boatmen." A harsh but not altogether undeserved verdict, and it is only fair to add that he acknowledges the tremen-

s view of lakes and mountain from the more interesting doorway in the little twelfth century church of Aghadoe. Kerry scenery admits, is ravishing, but there is little else to see.

Scenery, for Mr. O'Connor, cannot compare with civilisation high, quoting Chekhov, he equates with "Turkish carpets and beautiful women." And though Kilkenny may boast few of either it has good architecture so that he finds it the loveliest of Irish counties. Kilkenny city, "once the capital of the English colony", comes near to satisfying his longing for the adult, uncensored way of life across the Irish Sea.

O'Connor is an enigmatic Irishman. There are times when he trails his coat under the noses of his detractors. No Irish writer has been so villified by his generation, but missiles like "shoneen" and "renegade" and "apostate" do not find their mark. For O'Connor is certainly something more animate than an Aunt Sally for outraged patriots. There is the Frank O'Connor who is steeped in Irish saga and folk-lore and an incomparable translator of Irish poetry. It is easy to sniff at the blemishes in his work, but they are insignificant. We can forgive his adolescent naughtiness for his corn stooks like golden chessmen, and his poker-faced white-washed houses beside which he pedalled his "Irish Miles."

There are some almost topical tit-bits in the book. Yeats in his youth tried to induce a secret society to steal the Coronation Stone. Baltinglass is one of the many dreary holes he passed through, though it contains the ruins of a Cistercian Abbey, the chancel arch of which has tall pillars with bulbous bases. And what has Clonakilty in common with Portadown? Both suffer from a "snug, smug, orthodoxy." It is a comfort to a Catholic to be assured that the Pope has a good name in Clonakilty.

Frank O'Connor's logic is anything but Aristotelian. "There is no fallacy," he says, "more firmly maintained in Ireland than that of the complete difference in character between one town and the next." Yet he finds Kilkenny exciting and most other towns depressing while Cork is a "hell-hole" in which no average person over eighteen can be happy. He would like to classify towns according to their maximum mental age. O'Connor's concept of "mental age" seems to differ from that defined by American psychologists whose intelligence tests proved too much for Yeats and himself.

It is exhilarating to dash through Connaught in O'Connor's van. A little civilisation, he thinks, would have upset the romantic literature of the western counties. In Galway and its extension Mayo, poetry is not "the preserve of small exclusive coteries" but permeates the life of the whole community. Lines which he impeccably translates brought tears to his eyes by their beauty. Connemara is a far cry from his charming pub in Chipping Camden, where he and a fellow-Irishman roared with laughter at the customer who had dinner on Friday "only once a week."

In Sligo he returns to his beloved civilisation, although Sligo

was always poet's country and will now be Yeats' for ever. He continues to Donegal and here he gives a clue to his indifference to scenery—it is the sense of pity which throbs through his writing. "To the holiday-maker the sands, the mountains and the lakes are holiday ground, to the cottagers in their low cottages, which shine in the darkest night, they are a harsh stepmother." He does not want to live in Donegal: one feels that he could not bear to live in a land of pitiless poverty.

The last lap of his journey is through the Midlands whose drunken racegoers and dilapidated old churches he cannot endure. Longford is a really terrible town, but it evokes memories of Caroldan and Goldsmith. I will steal one last quotation: "It was a tragedy that Goldsmith did not return to Ireland, but it is the gentler type of Irishman—the Moores and Sheridans—who permits himself as a rule to become the exile." A tragedy no less poignant, maybe, if the not-so-gentle Frank O'Connor will still peer across the Irish Channel from his pied-à-terre in Killiney unheeding the call from the deep heart's core.

Those who cannot stomach Frank O'Connor's poteen may find refreshment in Mr. Wood's English mild beer. The author is modest about his achievement of walking a thousand miles in two months, covering all the maritime counties of Ireland as well as climbing the highest mountains in each of the four provinces.

Mountaineering is beset with unexpected hardships. He scrambled up Croaghnaun and viewed the glistening waters of Clew Bay dotted with rocky islets, and Slievemore gleaming in the clear light of early evening. He gasped at the thought of a mountain "with half its bulk severed by the sword of a titan incomparably greater than Finn MacCool of Irish legend." But he missed his tea, and nearly missed dinner: "it was worth it," he adds.

From Mangerton the view of Killarney's lakes and fells enthralled him though he had not lunched, and it was nearly tea-time when after a fatiguing climb he reached the topmost cairn.

Tea means more to Mr. Wood than architecture to Frank O'Connor. Ireland is a "dear, dear land," where a plain tea is really plain, without buns or cakes nor even jam at some places, and usually costs one and sixpence with an extra threepence when waited on by a sweet little maid as in Inchigeela.

His journey was not packed with incident, but he did have some exciting experiences. On his first night in Dublin he tells how he shared a room with a large stout man "who presently surprised me by kneeling at his bedside." Mr. Wood, however, had been in the army and slept with the trousers containing all his money under his pillow.

Some of our more insular fellow-countrymen maintain that tourists come here to smoke all our cigarettes and drink all our whiskey. Mr. Wood is guiltless of any such predatory intentions. He is a non-smoker and not a heavy drinker. His first lapse from total abstinence occurred at Blarney where, cheered by the nicest



plain tea he had in Ireland, "with homemade blackcurrant jam and seldom seen pastries," he treated a Bantry grazier and himself to a glass of stout. His total expenditure on intoxicants for the two-months' tour was 3s. 10d., a Lenten figure for the average native consumer.

The book has useful tips for visitors on the pronunciation of Irish place-names and the author's translation of Gaelic names is unfailingly accurate. Some of the other merits of the book are the scraperboard drawings by J. C. Coleman, a map showing the route followed, and an excellent index. Any intending tramp through Ireland should pack a copy in his rucksack.

TIM O'DONOGHUE.

### THE JOYCE INDUSTRY

JAMES JOYCE'S DUBLIN, BY PATRICIA HUTCHINS. (*The Grey Walls Press, 15/-*).

The notion of an attractive book like *James Joyce's Dublin* must have occurred to many of those Irishmen who are cynically or honestly interested in what is now the Joyce Industry. Instead of talking about the notion, Miss Patricia Hutchins has acted on it, and she has acted with tact and taste. The initial trouble with a book of this kind is to prevent it from becoming a mere illustrated guide-book since Joyce's references to Dublin and its suburbs are multitudinous. He is one of those rare cases in literature of writers becoming their cities. Dante, too, became Florence, venomously and affectionately and pathetically, but he was unfortunate in not being followed soon after his death by a Miss Hutchins, eager to record pictorially and in words old streets, old houses, old haunts. She will not, to be sure, satisfy those G.I.'s of Joycean scholarship, the foot-slogging Americans in search of D.Ph's. They, one feels, might be more thankful for a massive, detailed, Tourist-Boardy sort of compilation.

She has, at any rate, produced a very pleasing book. The photographs, individually excellent and impressive as a collection, are obviously the result of careful choice and of a considerable knowledge of Joyce's works. They are mostly straightforward, candid and exact. Their clarity and what one might call their cool ordinariness, give no idea of the murk and movement with which Joyce invested his Dublin. An arty and perhaps eccentric cameraman, fooling about with light and angles and, perhaps, doing a bit of faking, might manage to suggest the quality of the Dublin that sprawls across *Ulysses*. Miss Hutchins tactfully lets the reader's imagination have room for play.

The text which accompanies the pictures is in no way an attempt to explain them. The pictures give one aspect. The text gives another. It is a colourful, thoughtful and often an eloquent text written by a Joycean devotee who has been temperate enough

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to remember that "Time has spread a pleasant glow over this period for many of those who took part in the day-by-day ordinariness of it all, but Joyce's descriptions have swung to the other extreme, seeing the worst of this small society, emphasizing by a sense of exile a bitterness felt in retrospect." (The last word quoted should probably be "retrospection"!) Miss Hutchins follows the intricate track of the nomadic Joyce family and her study prompts the question: how much did this nomadism contribute to the rootlessness as well as the nostalgia for places of James Joyce.

A few passages in her text could have been amended for sloppy sentence construction. On pp 16, 19 and 20, untidy writing halts the flow of the sense. On page 37 Clonliffe is misspelt as Cloncliffe. On page 80 the word "imagerial" occurs as a neologism. On page 84, Miss Hutchins states that no study has yet been made of the part Joyce played in the opening of the *Volta* cinema. A study was made by Proinsias O Conluain some time ago, and broadcast in Irish from Radio Eireann. An essay by the same writer on the same subject was published in *Indiu* (December 15, 1950), but Miss Hutchins' book was published before it appeared. Lastly, why is there no picture of Buck Mulligan?

Miss Hutchins is to be thanked for having produced one of the few pleasant and readable books about James Joyce, Father, now, of a turgid Anna Liffey of words.

FRANCIS MacMANUS.

### MARY LAVIN'S NEW NOVEL

MARY O'GRADY, BY MARY LAVIN. (*Michael Joseph*, 12/6).

When one has had a rich experience it is pleasant to sit back for a little and let fancy play. When a book has given to, and drawn from, us a wealth of emotion suggestive thoughts arise; questions crowd the mind. How did this work come into being? Surmise may fall wide of the mark, but it is no less intriguing, so one indulges . . . Did the creator of Mary O'Grady catch a glimpse of a face which struck into her heart,—a face perhaps worn and sad which set her imagination working? Or it may be snatches of conversation, overheard in parts only, a few facts baldly stated . . . "came to Dublin as a young woman . . . very happily married . . . met with a lot of trouble later on . . . The eldest son . . . that was awful . . . mental home now . . . A terrible crash . . . those two girls . . . and the other son gone out foreign. One girl married and lives in the country but that was after . . ." By such as this, or by something that none of us will ever know of, the creator's urge was awakened. I think she brooded long and with intensity before beginning work.

Her book is divided into ten parts—panels we may call them—and though the first only is labelled 'Mary' she is the central

figure in them all, each showing her in relation to another member of the family. When the round of panels has been finished something in the nature of a monument has been viewed.

Though brimful of happiness in the days of early married life Mary O'Grady is, from the start, hyper-sensitive. Feelings and counter feelings keep charging through her being; she is forever changing colour. Having come, with great readiness, from the country town, Tullamore, to live out her life in Dublin, she makes of Tullamore a remembered Eden. Her children are destined to hear of it as a place beyond compare. When neighbours stop and speak to the young couple she is 'grateful for their kindness' but glad to hurry away with the young husband who laughs so happily at her shyness. Later, with children, she is overfearful of any hurt that may befall them; usual with a young mother—typical, as we call it. Yes, Mary O'Grady is a typical woman, is to a large extent, every woman. But, if so, the artist who has worked upon these panels has a very individual slant; what might have been an ordinary, and even in parts a drab story, is seen now full of wisdom which delights; full too of yearning. An artist's feelings, kept under strict control, act like a magnet on ours.

When youth is gone and Mary's husband has died, sorrows come crowding thickly so that Rosie, last member of the family, cries out in desperation: "we are unlucky people!" Mary is on her feet (though not so quickly as of old)—"How dare you talk like that! What do you mean? Didn't I have all of you children? Didn't I have your father? And didn't we all have our love and affection for each other? What more could we have had than that?" Rosie looked into those eyes so full of love, into which she had looked only too seldom . . ."

There is a flood of golden light in that last panel, like the golden fields through which Mary, now an ageing woman, in a half-dose by the fire, sees her dear ones coming to meet her. "If you only knew," she says to Rosie, "how I used to love to watch you, just to look at your faces when you didn't know I was looking at all." She smiled . . ."

Mary O'Grady does not leave us depressed.

TERESA DEEVY.

#### THE LONELY TOWER, BY T. R. HENN, (*Methuen*, 21/-).

An increasing tendency in modern literary criticism is for the critic to worry his way through the work in search of the man. Allingham declared that his appreciation of Shakespeare's works would have been greatly increased if he had known more about William Shakespeare. In our own time, however, this curiosity is tainted by an unbalanced desire to find out how things work, with the emphasis on mechanism rather than miracle; so that the poem is rapidly becoming a matter for psychological probing, and the art of the novel is becoming largely the art of autobiography.



It is part of the pattern, therefore, that while we waited for Yeats's Collected Poems at least six volumes of criticism of the man and the poetry appeared or were in the hands of publishers.

Like Blake, Yeats is an exciting quarry for the literary detectives. He was one of the few moderns who approached near to completeness, combining greatness of the life with greatness of the work. (Who is T. S. Eliot?) With Yeats the life and the poetry were one. The poetry provided the necessity for certain attitudes and ventures; the personal history became transmitted into the poem; and the completed circle acquired the character of myth. In *The Lonely Tower*, T. R. Henn breaks into the circle at different points: dutifully, from the viewpoint of the poet's early environment and ancestry; more enthusiastically, from a consideration of Yeats's contemporaries, Synge, Lady Gregory, A.E., Pound and the rest; from the influence of works of art, literature, painting and the art of relationship: but when the attempt is made to gather together the separate segments (as Yeats in his life and work gathered them together) Mr. Henn has something of the appearance of a man on a windy day struggling with hat, umbrella and a chin-high armful of books and papers. In short, the jigsaw pieces fall apart.

The study of the segments, however, is interesting and informative: particularly the pages devoted to myth and symbol. Poetry, said Allingham (who was usually commonplace and right) has a logic of its own. Mr. Henn is at his best in exploring the hidden logic of which the symbol is at once the product and also something alive in its own right (where the metaphor unites, the symbol transmutes): and Yeats's symbols he separates into three classes—those related to history, the archetypal symbols, and those growing into a personal mythology. The strange thing about symbols of the second class is the amount of explanation they require; for, while the symbol rooted in national or personal history may require elaboration, the symbol which, it is claimed, plucks an echo from the collective unconscious, should not require an explanatory note. Much of Yeats's symbolism is over-conscious, implying previous argument. 'God has not died for the white heron', is a result of intellectual speculation; it does not contain it. Blake's famous declaration, 'I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's', was to some extent misread by Yeats. The word is *create*, not *manufacture*.

Mr. Henn's study of *A Vision* is methodical and painstaking; but one wonders whether the mathematical approach is the right one. The importance of *A Vision* does not lie solely in its being 'the rough draft towards a system by which myth and magic and philosophy might be related', but also in how the book came into being. A learned commentary on Yeats's fiddling with the first version is of little interest beside the question of the authorship. Who is responsible for the first draft? It is to be hoped that some

day Mrs. Yeats will tell us. The literary detectives seem strangely frightened of the underworld.

*The Lonely Tower* will take its place as a useful reference book for students of the Yeats-myth; it is a shrewd and scholarly work, if at times a little knowing, and perhaps too much concerned with sources rather than estuaries. Only Yeats can give us the complete picture, and, given the opportunity, he is capable of doing it.

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,  
What stalked through the Post Office?

ROY McFADDEN.

WILD EARTH, BY PADRAIC COLUM, (*The Talbot Press Ltd.*, 6/-)  
RESERVATIONS, Poems BY VALENTIN IREMONGER, (*Envoy*,  
*Dublin*, 6/-).

When a book appears bearing the same title as an earlier volume by the same author, the publisher has, I believe, the responsibility of making clear exactly wherein, if at all, these volumes differ. I have compared my copy of *Wild Earth* (Maunsel, 1907) which contains 25 poems, with the book under review which contains 31, and I find that 14 poems are common to each, that some of these are identical, some slightly revised, some greatly revised, and one in particular, *The Ballad of Downal Bawn* ("The Man who Dreamt of Treasure," 1907) vastly extended and so changed as to become a new poem.

Hence in spite of the coincidence of titles, this is no mere reprint, and may safely be purchased by those who also possess the earlier volume; and for poetry readers, or book-buyers of a more recent generation who know Colum only through a handful of anthology pieces, this provides an admirable bundle for reference: not a completely representative selection—it does not set out to be such, for it is limited to his Irish work, so *Men on Islands*, *Sandalwood*, *Crows*, are excluded. Yet as it is Irish in intention, I should have liked a few others, *Roger Casement*, *Last of the Troop* and *Reminiscence*, for the sake of 'Miler Dowdall, the great pugilist', and *Asses* that "would do For a ragged man With a pound or two."

Still let us be grateful that so many of Colum's poems are available again, and once more indulge ourselves in the enjoyment of his strange incantatory quality, by which, with apparent simplicity of rhythm, and severely narrowed range of properties, he invades and possesses the imagination with an unobtrusive sense of assurance, so that, strangely identifying ourselves with him, we too join in murmuring:

I could quiet your herds  
With my words, with my words.

Colum is perhaps of all our poets the most difficult to place: he is not better than X, or not so good as Y; he is simply Colum, and remains so, paradoxically, by withdrawing towards the anonymity of folksong.

Of Valentin Iremonger's poems I was long ago an admirer. I remember reading *The Toy Horse*, and *Elizabeth*, and being deeply moved by their simplicity, the simplicity and clarity of crayons and glass marbles. This I felt was a new note in our verse, but as subsequent additions to the slender corpus of *On the Barricades*, (1944) appeared in journals and anthologies it seemed that note was being dissipated and lost.

Reading them now in bulk, one can, I believe, see why this sense of unease has arisen. Iremonger, impressionable to a degree, had begun to register the impact of his contemporaries, Auden, MacNeice, Rodgers, Dylan Thomas, all the more emphatically because of the sensitivity of his awareness; and, concurrently, in a strenuous effort to extend his range, he has tried to strengthen his vocabulary with harshly inappropriate words, with clichés, with ephemeral catch-phrases. In this I believe him to have been sadly mistaken: the solid objects of his earlier universe remain valid, but the baggy flannels and sportscoats of Hector and Icarus already show their age.

Of course he has been right to experiment, and he has tried hard, but in the wrong direction. Yet the quality in the earlier poems, persisting in a thin jet-and-trickle through the later, is individual enough to offer the hope that in his next collection he will again assert his personal note.

JOHN HEWITT.

BY WINDING ROADS. BY JOHN IRVINE. Illustrated by William Conor, (*H. R. Carter Publications, Belfast, 8/6*).

A child I knew long ago, with the intimacy of a mirror, used to find endless delight in a grand old book, *Place Names of Ireland*, by P. W. Joyce. That child was recalled to be by John Irvine's *By Winding Roads*. He too has found the charm and implied poetry in the names of Irish places. Here is his *Music*:—

'Parknasilla, Lisdoonvarna,  
Enniskerry, Lisadell,  
Like the trembling of a harpstring,  
Or the chiming of a bell,  
Connemara, Rosapenna,  
And Dunleary of the ships,  
Say them over, say them slowly,  
They are music on your lips.'

If you love the poems of another born wanderer—R. L. Stevenson—you will find in these direct, simple road songs by John Irvine the same spirit. The illustrations and coloured jacket.



give the vigour of wind-blown life. Take *Farm Horses* with the picture showing how three horses :

... toss their heads and gallop wild  
Along the field like any child  
Who runs and leaps and shouts and sings  
For freedom and the joy of things.'

There is too in these verses the sense of a magic just out of sight.

I must not dwell on my personal love for familiar names like: 'Clogher and Augher and Fivemiletown', but I might have beguiled damp waitings for a tardy bus with their song.

This seems to me just the birthday present one wants for someone who knows these winding roads.

W. M. L.

NUABHEARSAIOCHT, Edited by Seán O Tuama (*Sáirséal and Dill*, 5/-).

This anthology of poetry in Irish since 1939 is a milestone of the greatest importance. To anyone who has kept in touch with the language movement, the excellence of its present-day poets will, presumably, come as no surprise; but to those who have the tongue but have failed to keep abreast of its productions, this volume will be a revelation.

In his very able introduction, the editor, Seán O Tuama, lists the three agents of the rebirth in 1939 of Irish poetry. They were the competitions sponsored by the Oireachtas, the War, and the founding of 'Cómhar' and other Irish papers and reviews. He points out the difficulties that faced the poets, difficulties springing from the relative unsuitability of Irish for modern poetry, and explains how these were handled. He claims that modern Irish poetry is going the same road as that written elsewhere—the road towards what he calls 'urban poetry'—but this is by no means borne out by his fine selection for *Nuabhéarsíocht*.

The work in this anthology is original and confident; one feels that bonds have been broken. These poets are every bit as good and as exciting as any Irish poet of today writing in English, and I feel that one of them, Seán O Ríordáin, is among the very best this country has produced since Yeats.

D.M.

HAMLET AND THE PIRATES, BY D. S. SAVAGE. (*Eyre and Spottiswoode*, 9/-).

The author of this book is a literary critic who is rapidly acquiring an imposing reputation, resting mainly at the moment on his book, *The Withered Branch*, in which he cast a very cold eye on the major figures of the modern novel. It seems, however,

that Mr. Savage does not extend the same detached unimpressibility to his dealings with Shakespeare: he is ready to believe anything about the Bard, the more marvellous the better.

He has recently been engaged on an intensive study of *Hamlet*, the results of which are to be published shortly. In the course of his research he came upon some indications which suggested a surprising line of thought, and he has set out his conclusions in the present slim volume.

His thesis, briefly, is that *Hamlet* was published as a "stolen and surreptitious copy" in the "Bad Quarto" of 1603; that this edition was mostly withdrawn and destroyed; that it was republished by the now honest pirates by agreement with Shakespeare and the company (this edition being the "Good Quarto"); and that, for this second edition, Shakespeare revised the play, rewrote it considerably, and inserted the entire episode of Hamlet's capture by the pirates as a veiled reference to the history of the two editions. His argument is plausible, ingenious and painstaking, and it is hard to quarrel with its later stages. Indeed, his final suggestion—that Shakespeare may himself have arranged for the piracy—strikes me as the best idea in the book. It is his basic assumptions which make me uneasy.

On Mr. Savage's own description, the Good Quarto is an altogether different play from the Bad Quarto, not just the same play with added material: the entire line and atmosphere has been changed, as, for example, the *Playboy* would be changed to a lesser extent by the inclusion of that first scene which Synge scrapped. "The question arises," says Mr. Savage, "why should Shakespeare have elected to introduce precisely this element, at the eleventh hour, into the ingredients of his play, thus considerably complicating the invisible, the *literary* plot: and why *pirates*?" To which I reply irreverently: "Why not?"

My point, in brief, is that the author appears to have mislaid his sense of humour, a failing to which literary researchers are particularly prone. He makes many references to the nature of artistic creation, without any apparent realisation of how a man goes about writing a play, and arrives at what is possibly the right answer by way of all the wrong reasons. The proceedings of the Baker Street Irregulars should be sufficient warning to all such researchers. And did not Chesterton once prove, beyond any reasonable doubt, that Napoleon was nothing but a nature-myth? And, finally, do not Miller and myself (smiling gently) still remember the scandalous life-history of one Morgan Quille which we fabricated on the strength of one line in *The Magic Glasses*? However, if only because of this recollection, I thank D. S. Savage most heartily, and honestly recommend this book both to the gullible and the sceptics.

MAURICE KENNEDY.

EnGLiSh hOW SHe iS SpOKe. Conducted by ARNOLD VAN PRAAG AND PAUL ELEK. (*Paul Elek*, 6/-).

A skilfully arranged and cleverly illustrated collection of brief attacks on the language of Shakespeare by what the compilers call the "Heretik Foreigner": Continental business men, Siamese boxing promoters, Japanese houseboys, and the white man's burden in general. Not forgetting, of course, the Menace From Within. Keen *New Yorker* and *Punch*-folk will recognise some old friends here, such as Kabdi and the Wrist Holding Game: "Some players if are not capable of releasing their wrist, and the successful players of this party are less in account as compared to another, then the other party wins the laurels."

The description of Hilversum P.J.C., the "happy station", is about the funniest piece in the collection. The 'station' broadcast a non-stop unrehearsed programme in English, which was conducted by some thirty announcers who had but a smattering of the language. "If a narrator is lost for a difficult word such as 'apple', his twenty-nine colleagues form themselves into a choir and rush to his assistance by singing:

O, vistle, vile you vork,  
Vistle vile you vork,  
Vistle vile you . . .

which is kept up until either the word is found or else the defaulting announcer falls out, to give way to another who resumes the broadcast on a different theme."

It is a book to be read in small doses or not at all. Read at a sitting, one is inclined to get confused and even headaches.

J.E.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- FRANK O'CONNOR:** Born Cork, 1905. Has an international reputation as a master of the short-story form and has also published novels, travel books, and verse.
- MARY LAVIN:** Was acclaimed on the publication of her first book of short-stories, 'Tales from Bective Bridge'. Has since published further collections and two novels. Lives in Co. Meath.
- JAMES STEPHENS:** Born Dublin, 1882, died London, 1951. Short story writer, novelist, poet, broadcaster, talker,—one of the most brilliant figures of the Irish Literary Renaissance.
- VIVIAN MERCIER:** Born Dublin, 1919. Was Scholar of Trinity College, Dublin, where he took degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy. Is at present living in the U.S.A. where he teaches.
- ROBERT O'DONOGHUE:** Born Cork, 1925. Has had articles and stories printed, and his first published poem appeared in *Irish Writing* No. 6.
- PATRICK GALVIN:** Born Cork, 1925. National School education. Served in Africa and Middle East with R.A.F. and was, for a time, attached to the French Foreign Legion. His first work was accepted by *Poetry Ireland* and his poetry has since appeared widely.
- KIERAN O'MALLEY:** Born Cork, 1931. Educated at Presentation Brothers College, Cork, and is at present in U.C.D. This is his first publication.

### WE REGRET

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